DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 933 JC 950 071

TITLE	Moving through the Curriculum: An Analysis of Pre-Collegiate English Performance at the San Diego Community College District, Fall 1990 through Spring 1992.
INSTITUTION	San Diego Community Coll. District, CA. Research and Planning.
PUB DATE	Jul 94
NOTE	78p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Statistical Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Persistence; Cohort Analysis; *College English; Community Colleges; Comparative Analysis; Grade Point Average; *Grades (Scholastic); Longitudinal Studies; Multicampus Districts; Program Effectiveness; *Remedial Programs; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS	*San Diego Community College District CA

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to compare the success of students entering the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) at college and pre-college English levels to measure the effectiveness of English developmental programs. Ideally, the time spent in remedial programs should allow students to succeed and progress at the same rate as students who entered at college level. A database of fall 1990 first-time-in-college English students was categorized by skill level. The report compared measures of student success by ethnicity, age category, gender, and disability status. Three measures of success were used: academic performance; a longitudinal design comparing cumulative grade point average (GPA) and cumulative units earned; and persistence. Success rates in English courses taken in fall 1990 varied by skill level: 47% of the Basic Skills students, 54.7% of the English 51/56 (Basic Composition and College Reading Study Skills), and 47.2% of the college-level entrants earned successful grades in their English course; 41.4% of the Basic Skills students, 34.4% of the English 51/56 students, and 45% of the college-level students did not complete their English course. Other findings included the following: (1) basic skill entrants were more likely to earn zero units during the fall 1990 term than other groups; (2) tracking cumulative GPA over four semesters showed little difference between Basic Skills students and English 51/56 students, but a significant difference between these groups and college-level students, who consistently had a GPA approximately one-quarter point higher; and (3) after four semesters, persistence was highest for college-level students (66.4%) and lowest for English 51/56 students (53.7%). (KP)

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ED 377 933

Moving Through the Curriculum

An Analysis of Pre-Collegiate English Performance

at

The San Diego Community College District

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Fall 1990

Through

Spring 1992

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare the success of students entering the SDCCD college programs at the college and pre-collegiate English levels. In turn, this will provide a measure of the effectiveness of pre-collegiate programs in terms of preparing students to progress through the curriculum at the same rate and with the same success as students who originally enter at the college level. This report is in response to Title 5 research requirements for Matriculation concerning the pre-collegiate basic skills participation and completion rates for ethnic, gender, age and disability groups (Title 5, Section 55514(b)), and concerning the proportion of these students who subsequently enter and complete associate degree-applicable courses (Title 5, Section 55514(c)). The report also fulfills part of the research mandate under Student Equity by determining the ratio of the number of students who complete a degree-applicable course after having completed pre-collegiate basic skills courses.

Students enter the system with a variety of past educational experiences and skill levels. Pre-collegiate courses are designed to allow students to enter at a level at which they might be expected to succeed. It is hoped that this initial success will engender a positive attitude toward learning, and enable the student to quickly progress to college level coursework. Ideally, the time spent in the remedial program will allow students to succeed and progress at the same rates as students who entered at the college level, without delaying the educational process to an extent that discourages the student and causes the student to drop out.

Method

A database of Fall 1990 English students was prepared from mainframe data, with students categorized by the skill level of English courses enrolled in during Fall 1990. Records were selected for students indicating an application term of Fall 1990. Approximately 85% of these students were enrolled in college for the first-time. Selecting new applicants was intended to minimize the effects of prior college education that might interfere with the comparison of student outcomes. The report pertains only to those students meeting the above criteria, and is not intended to reflect the characteristics of all students in the program.

For the purpose of the study, courses offered in the SDCCD English program were divided into three groups based on the application of credits earned toward the associate degree. College level consists of courses fully applicable to the associate degree. In the SDCCD, this is English 70 and above. Courses one level below college English are listed in the catalog as English 101 Preparatory Courses, and restrict the student to applying three units of credit at this level to the associate degree. These courses are English 51 (Basic Composition) and English 56 (College Reading Study Skills). Two levels below college includes courses listed in the catalog as Basic Skills. For this study, all courses below the English 51/56 level (including ESL) are included.

Consistent with matriculation guidelines, the report measures performance by ethnicity, age category, gender, and disability status. In order to compare student success among entering English levels, three categories of determinants of success are employed. The first, Student Success, analyzes performance in the English course taken during the Fall 1990 term. Grades are categorized into successful (grade A, B, C, or Cr), Unsuccessful (D, F, I, or NC), and Not Completed (Drop or Withdrawal). Also shown are the percentages of students earning zero units during the Fall 1990 term. This indicates that the student either dropped or withdrew from all classes or earned a grade of F, NC, or I in all classes taken during the term. These students are excluded from further analysis until the time that they earn one or more units. Since a goal of this study is to measure the impact of the English program on the student, to include students who may have dropped early in the term would not provide a measure of the effectiveness of the instruction received and may unfairly bias the longitudinal portion of the study against one or more of the English categories or against a group within the category. The second measure of student success uses a longitudinal design to compare cumulative grade point average and cumulative units earned among English categories and groups within categories. Cumulative grade point average and cumulative units earned provide a measure of student preparedness for subsequent course work, and, in fact, a measure of the student's overall benefit from instruction. Semester-to-semester persistence is used to show the progression of Fall 1990 students earning greater than zero units to any course in a subsequent semester. Students are tracked from Fall 1990 for four semesters, to Spring 1992. Summer sessions are not included. Progression to college level courses is also shown, measured as the percentage of Fall 1990 greater than zero unit cohort that *successfully completed* at least one college level course during the next three semesters.

Findings

- Success rates in English courses taken during the first semester of the study (Fall 1990) varied by entering English cohort. For basic skills students, 47% earned a successful grade (A, B, C, or CR), 41.4% did not complete the course (grade of Drop or Withdrawal), and 11.6% earned an unsuccessful grade (D, F, NC, or I). For English 51/56 students, 54.7% were successful, 34.4% did not complete, and 10.8% were unsuccessful. College level entrants had 47.2% successful grades, 45% did not complete, and 7.7% received unsuccessful grades.

- Basic skills entrants were much more likely to earn zero units during the Fall 1990 term than students in the other groups. 25.6% of basic skills students earned zero units, compared to 18.5% of English 51/56 entrants and 20.2% of college level entrants.

The following analyses included only students having greater than zero cumulative units.

- Tracking the cumulative grade point average of the entering groups over four semesters showed that there was little difference in performance between basic skills entrants and English 51/56 students, but that there was a significant difference ($P<.05$) between these groups and the college level entrants for all four semesters involved. Regardless of term, college level entrants had a cumulative grade point average approximately one-fourth point higher (2.75 versus 2.5) than basic skills or English 51/56 entrants.

- Cumulative units differed between groups for the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 semesters ($P<.05$), but differences became statistically insignificant in later terms.

- Semester-to-semester persistence was highest for students entering at the college level.

- Students beginning in basic skills English or English 51/56 had only slight differences in the percentage of students who persisted to and successfully completed college level courses.

The above summaries describe characteristics of the entire cohort of students entering at each English level. The body of the report details differences between groups (ethnic, age, gender and disability) within each cohort. These differences are significant enough to warrant further attention and may have implications for the design or modification of student retention programs.

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Background and Introduction

Community Colleges in California are noted for adhering to the concept of open access by offering instruction to high school graduates, GED certificate holders, or any other person age 18 or above able to benefit from instruction. In this system, students have historically, through policy or practice, been encouraged to "test the waters" by enrolling in college level courses while making relatively little sacrifice in terms of money or disruption of employment or family obligations. The system has been effective in recruiting a diverse population, as well as students who are older than the "typical" four-year university student. By offering programs in the evenings, and in some cases on weekends, access is improved and the public is better served.

A mission of open access without some form of academic guidance can lead to, at a minimum, student frustration and at worst, chaos in the classroom. There must be some way to sort students by past educational and life experience in order to give all students the opportunity to succeed rather than fall behind in courses rigorous beyond their abilities. The assessment and placement system of the San Diego Community College District was analyzed in the report *Skills Testing and Disproportionate Impact: An Analysis of the Reading and Writing Test Performance of Students in the San Diego Community College District* (1991). The report noted that there are substantial differences in test scores and course placement among ethnic groups.

The use of assessment testing in community colleges attempts to "place" students in courses in which they would be expected to succeed. Measuring this success, however, can be problematic insofar as students enter the system with a wide variety of goals and expectations, as well as widely divergent backgrounds and skill levels. Matching students to courses of appropriate difficulty during their first term is assumed to lead to increased course success (measured by fewer drops, withdrawals, and non-productive grades of D, F, and No Credit) and to reduced frustration and sense of failure. This in turn is expected to stimulate student interest in higher education while improving persistence and eventual goal attainment.

Moving Through the Curriculum: An Analysis of Pre-Collegiate English Performance in the San Diego Community College District will provide a series of measures that will gauge the outcome of assessment disparity by comparing performance and persistence of students who actually enroll in various levels of English offered at City, Mesa, and Miramar Colleges and the Educational Cultural Complex college program. This report is in response to Title 5 research requirements for Matriculation concerning the pre-collegiate basic skills participation and completion rates for ethnic, gender, age and disability groups (Title 5, Section 55514(b)), and concerning the proportion of these students who subsequently enter and complete associate degree-applicable courses (Title 5, Section 55514(c)). The report also fulfills part of the research mandate under Student Equity by determining the ratio of the number of students who complete a degree-applicable course after having completed pre-collegiate basic skills courses.

Measuring Effectiveness

Ideally, students entering at pre-collegiate levels will quickly remedy the skill deficiencies that prevented them from entering at the higher level and will progress through the college program with only slight delay. Additionally, these students will graduate, transfer, and gain occupational skills at rates at least equal to students who entered at the college level. One of many criticisms of assessment and placement suggests that students become weary of attending remedial courses and thus drop out of the system before they fully enter the system. A placement process that disproportionately places members of underrepresented groups in courses below the college level may be a factor contributing to the lower educational achievement for the members of these groups. This report will attempt to respond to these and other questions about the potential of pre-collegiate students by analyzing their successes, tracking them longitudinally, and comparing their progress and performance to students who enter at the college level.

Method

A database of Fall 1990 English students was prepared from data extracted from the District's mainframe computer, and analyzed using SPSS/PC and Paradox software. Records were selected for students indicating an application term of Fall 1990. The study categorizes students by the skill level of English courses enrolled in during the Fall 1990 term at City, Mesa and Miramar Colleges and the Educational Cultural Complex college program. It is estimated that 85% of these students were first-time college students, with the remaining 15% consisting of students with prior attendance at another college, or prior SDCCD enrollees returning after an absence of greater than one year. Selecting only those students who were new applicants is intended to minimize the effects of prior college education that might interfere with the comparison of student outcomes. Data in the report pertain only to those students who met the above criteria, and are not intended to reflect the characteristics of all students in the program.

For the purpose of the study, courses offered in the SDCCD English program were divided into three groups based on the application of credits earned toward the associate degree. College level consists of courses fully applicable to the associate degree. In the SDCCD, this is English 70 and above. One level below college English are listed in the catalog as English 101 Preparatory Courses, and restrict the student to applying three units of credit at this level to the associate degree. These courses are English 51 (Basic Composition) and English 56 (College Reading Study Skills). Two levels below college include courses listed in the catalog as Basic Skills. For this study, all courses below the English 51/56 level (including ESL) are included.

Based on matriculation guidelines, the report measures student success by ethnicity, age category, gender, and disability status. In order to compare student success between entering English levels, three categories of determinants of success are

employed. The first, Student Success, analyzes performance in the English course taken during the Fall 1990 term. Grades are categorized into Successful (grade A, B, C, or CR), Unsuccessful (D, F, I, or NC), and Not Completed (Drop or Withdrawal). At each entering English level, graphs are used to show the percentage of students earning each grade by ethnicity, age, gender and disability status. Also shown are the percentages of students earning zero units during the Fall 1990 term. This indicates that the student either dropped or withdrew from all classes or earned a grade of F, NC, or I in all classes taken during the term. These students are excluded from further analysis until the time that they earn one or more units. Since a goal of this study is to measure the impact of the English program on the student, including students who may have dropped early in the term does not provide a measure of the effectiveness of the instruction received and may unfairly bias the longitudinal portion of the study against one or more of the English categories or against a group within the category. Furthermore, there are distinct differences in zero unit attainment between English categories and between groups within English categories that may be useful for designing or modifying retention programs.

The second measure of student success uses a longitudinal design to compare cumulative grade point average and cumulative units earned between English categories and groups within categories. This analysis excludes students who earned zero cumulative units. Cumulative grade point average and cumulative units earned provide a measure of student preparedness for subsequent course work, and, in fact, a measure of the student's overall benefit from instruction. However, these also measure intangible factors such as motivation, commitment, family and peer support, and the level of financial resources available to the student, all of which impact success to an extent perhaps greater than that of initial English course placement.

The third measure of success is persistence. While it is common for students to have a break of one or more semesters during the course of their college attendance, chances for attainment of academic goals may be enhanced if the student is able to attend without break. Additionally, the relevance of English instruction received in the first semester of attendance may diminish with a break in instruction of any significant length of time. Semester-to-semester persistence is used to show the progression of Fall 1990 students earning greater than zero units to any course in a subsequent semester. Students are tracked from Fall 1990 for four semesters, to Spring 1992. Summer sessions are not included. Progression to college level courses is also shown, which begins with the greater than zero unit cohort in Fall 1990 and measures the percent of the group that *successfully complete* one or more college level courses during the next four semesters. To facilitate the analysis with the available data, a college level course is one with a course number greater than or equal to 70, excluding courses offered in the Disabled Students Programs and Services department.

Findings

- Success rates in English courses taken during the first semester of the study (Fall 1990) varied by entering English cohort. For basic skills students, 47% earned a successful grade (A, B, C, or CR), 41.4% did not complete the course (grade of Drop or Withdrawal), and 11.6% earned an unsuccessful grade (D, F, NC, or I). For English 51/56 students, 54.7% were successful, 34.4% did not complete, and 10.8% were unsuccessful. College level entrants had 47.2% successful grades, 45% did not complete, and 7.7% received unsuccessful grades.

- Basic skills entrants were more likely to earn zero units during the Fall 1990 term than students in the other groups. 25.6% of basic skills students earned zero units, compared to 18.5% of English 51/56 entrants and 20.2% of college level entrants.

The following analyses included only students having greater than zero cumulative units.

- Tracking the cumulative grade point average of the entering groups over four semesters showed that there was little difference in performance between basic skills entrants and English 51/56 students, but that there was a significant difference ($P<.05$) between these groups and the college level entrants for all four semesters involved. Regardless of term, college level entrants had a cumulative grade point average approximately one-fourth point higher (2.75 versus 2.5) than basic skills or English 51/56 entrants.

- Cumulative units differed between groups for the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 semesters ($P<.05$), but differences became statistically insignificant in later terms.

- Semester-to-semester persistence was highest for students entering at the college level. Based on the number of Fall 1990 students earning greater than zero units, 87.6% persisted to Spring 1991, 73.1% to Fall 1991, and 66.4% to Spring 1992. Basic skills persistence was second highest overall, with 88.5% persisting to Spring 1991, 67.9% to Fall 1991, and 60.6% to Spring 1992. English 51/56 entrants had the lowest rates of persistence, with 72.6% persisting to Spring 1991, 58.9% to Fall 1991 and 53.7% to Spring 1992.

- Students beginning in basic skills English or English 51/56 had only slight differences in the percentage of students who persisted to and successfully completed college level courses. Beginning with the Spring 1991 semester, students in the basic skills cohort persisted to college level courses at higher rates than students who began in English 51/56 courses. To facilitate analysis using the available data, college level courses are defined as those having a course number greater than or equal to 70.

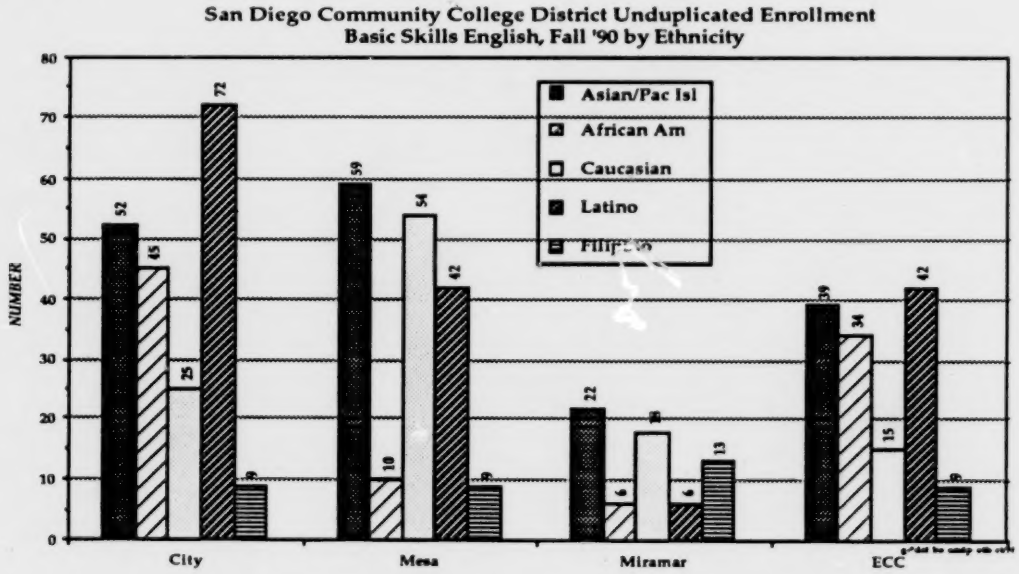
The previous summaries describe characteristics of the entire cohort of students entering at each English level. The body of the report details differences between groups (ethnic, age, gender and disability) within each cohort. These differences are significant enough to warrant further attention and may have implications for the design or modification of student retention programs.

Part I: Performance by Ethnicity

Fall 1990 English Enrollment by Ethnic Cohort

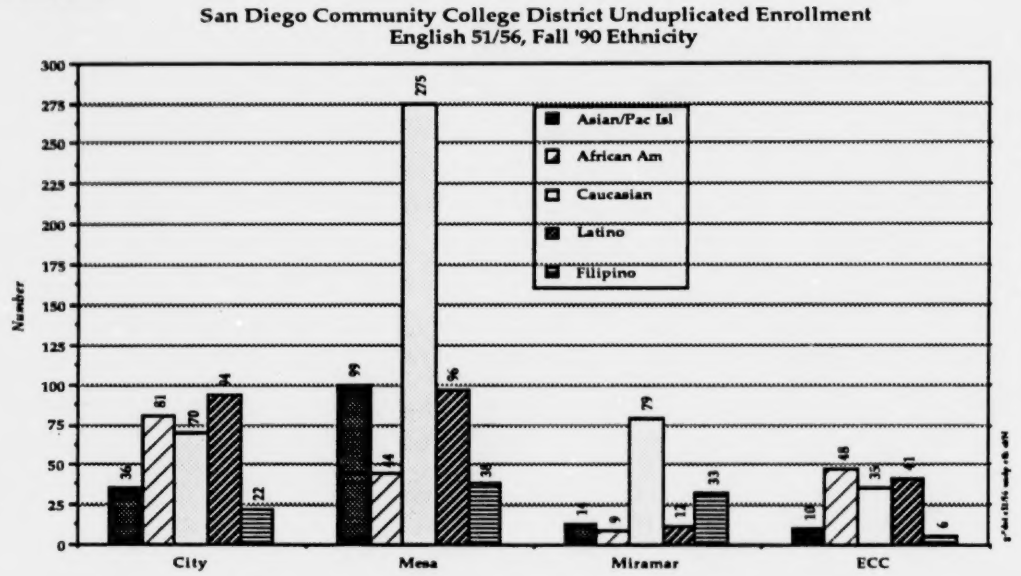
The following graphs show Fall 1990 enrollment by ethnicity, entering English level and campus.

Graph 1

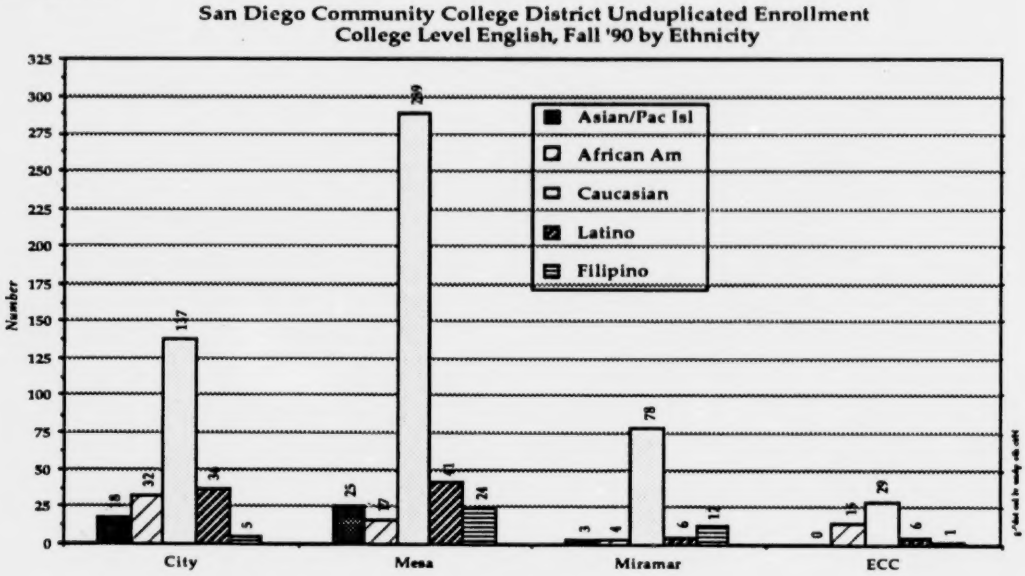


(Fall 1990 Enrollment by Ethnicity Continued)

Graph 2



Graph 3



Ethnic representation is greatest at the basic skills level when measured as a percentage of total enrollment. When measured in absolute terms, however, a greater number of ethnically diverse students are enrolled in English 51/56 courses than in basic skills. At the college level, the majority of students are Caucasian.

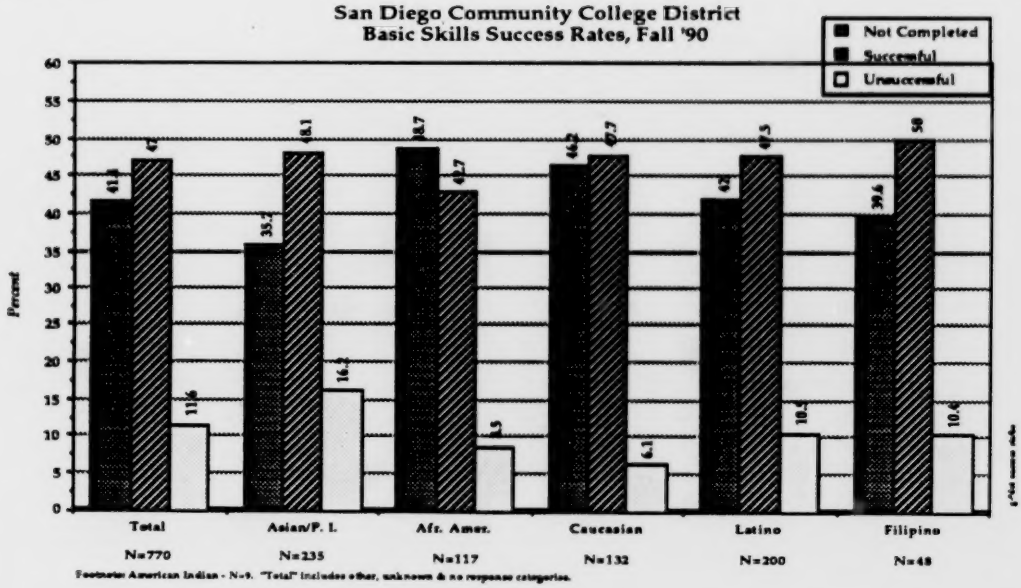
Course Success Rates

Course success rates are measured by the percentage of students earning a grade of A, B, C, or CR. Unsuccessful includes grades of D, F, NC and I, and the Not Completed category includes those who dropped the course or earned a grade of W. The graphs include only grades in English courses and include duplicate grades for students who took more than one English course in Fall, 1990.

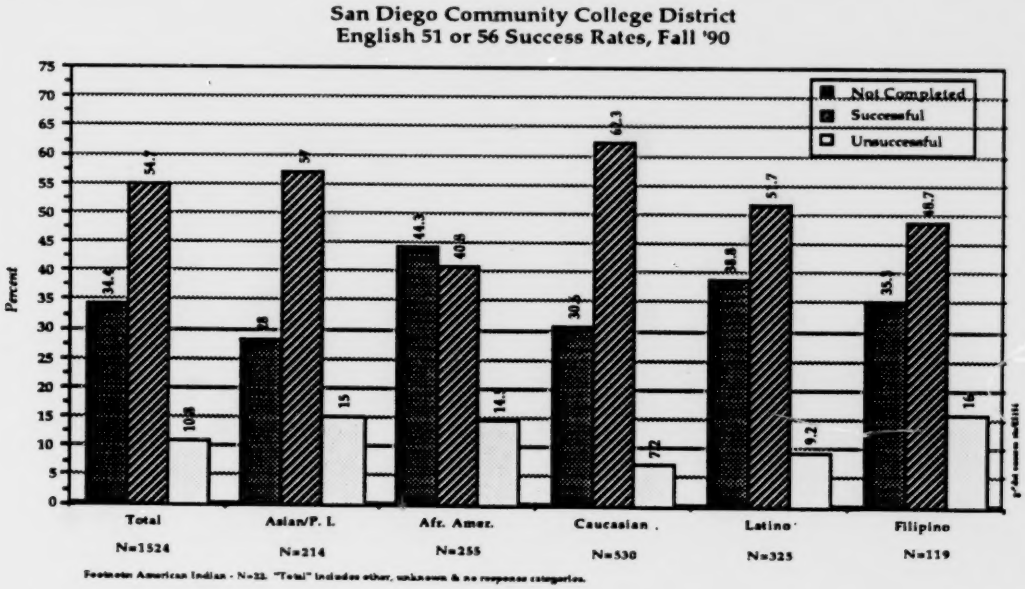
The graphs on the following page show course performance by ethnic group. Differences in success rates between cohorts show no consistent pattern when analyzed using districtwide data. Students entering English 51 or 56 have the highest success rates (54.7%) and the lowest drop/withdrawal rates (34.4%). There is very little difference between English course success rates for basic skills students compared to college level students. Success rates are virtually identical (47.1% for basic skills, 47.2% for college level), with the main difference being a lower rate of non-completion for basic skills (41.3%) than for college level (45%) and a higher percentage of unsuccessful students in basic skills (11.7%) than in college level (7.7%). For individual ethnic groups areas of concern include the fact that African American students have rather high non-completion rates at the basic skills and 51/56 levels, Asian students have somewhat more unsuccessful grades at lower English levels than the other groups, and Latino students have unusually high numbers of non-completers at the college level than the other ethnic groups and than Latinos at lower English levels.

Success Rates by Ethnicity

Graph 4

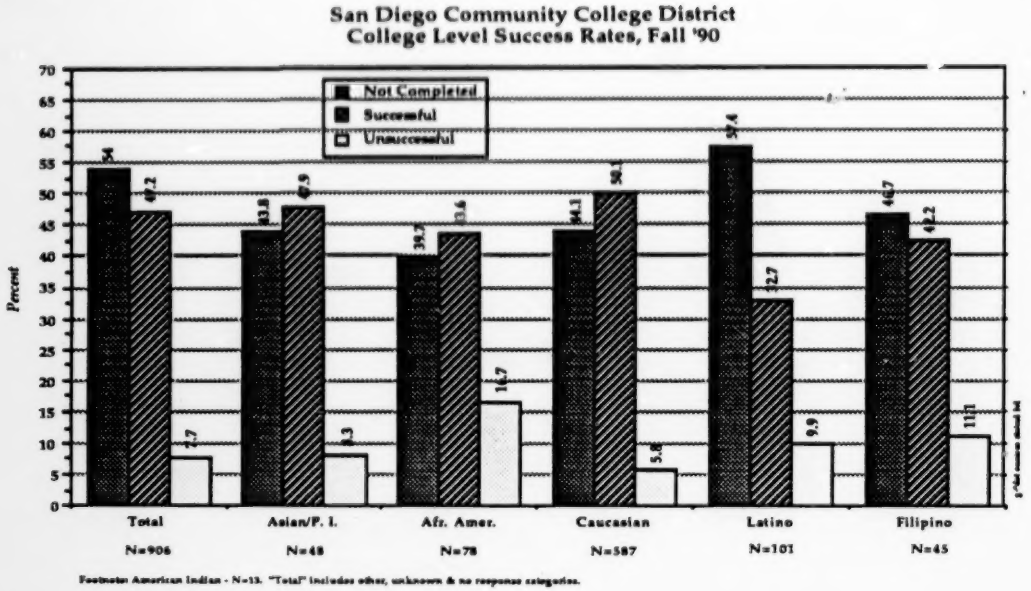


Graph 5



(Success Rates by Ethnicity Continued)

Graph 6

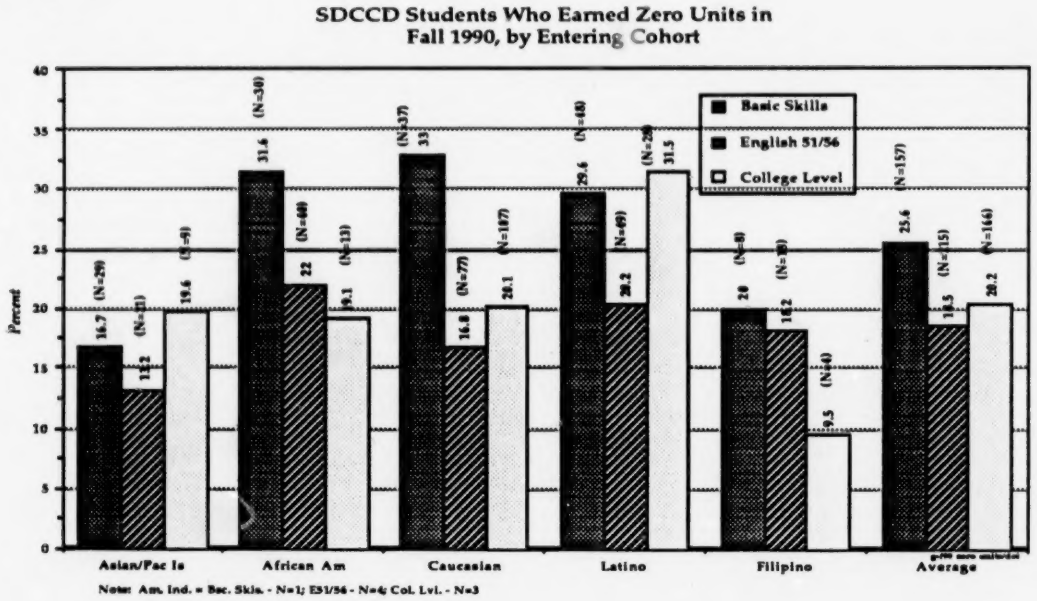


Percent of Students Earning Zero Units in Fall, 1990

A comparison of first-semester course completion by entering cohort forms the basis for further analysis of persistence. Initial course placement is believed by many to be of paramount importance in determining subsequent academic success. Differences in zero unit attainment noted between groups does not necessarily reflect poorly on the effectiveness of the English instruction received since students may drop from or fail courses for a variety of reasons unrelated to English performance or competency. It is quite possible, in fact, that a number of first-time students in this category attend the community college to "test the waters" before deciding to pursue other goals or other forms of education. The fact that students are able to enroll without necessarily making a long-term commitment is a measure of the effectiveness of the community college's goal of open access. Another reason for showing differences in first semester attrition is that subsequent analyses of cumulative grade point average and cumulative units will consider only students with greater than zero units. This analysis does not exclude students earning zero units in their first semester if they succeed in completing units in a subsequent semester. Since a main objective of this study is to gauge the effectiveness of the English program at different skill levels, a process that includes students with zero units would distort the cumulative grade point average and cumulative units earned by students who persisted and perhaps unfairly bias the results against one or more of the programs.

The following graph provides a summary of zero unit attainment. Districtwide, 25.6% of students entering at the basic skills English level earned zero units in the first semester of attendance, compared to 18.5% for English 51/56 entrants and 20.2% for college level English entrants.

Graph 7



Course Performance and Progression

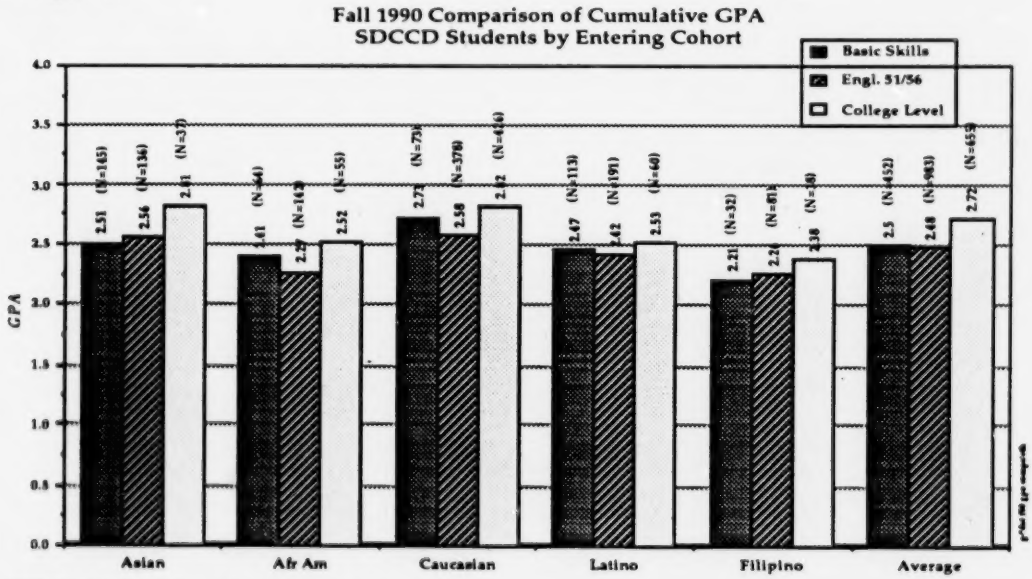
Cumulative grade point average and cumulative units are employed as measures of academic performance and as indicators of course progression. This part of the study is longitudinal in design, with cohorts based on entering English level. Each cohort was tracked for a total of four semesters.

This section of the report is divided into two parts. The first part compares cumulative GPA and units by cohort, and the second analyzes course progression to college level courses from basic skills and English 51/56 courses.

Cumulative Grade Point Average by Ethnicity

Tracking students for four semesters revealed that there is little difference (P<.05) between the districtwide performance of basic skills students and English 51/56 students, as measured by cumulative grade point average. There is, however, a statistically significant difference between the performance of college level English students and students from the other groups. Regardless of term, college level entrants had a cumulative grade point average approximately one-fourth point higher (2.75 versus 2.5) than basic skills or English 51/56 entrants. There is no consistent pattern of performance among entering cohorts when analyzing cumulative grade point average within ethnic group.

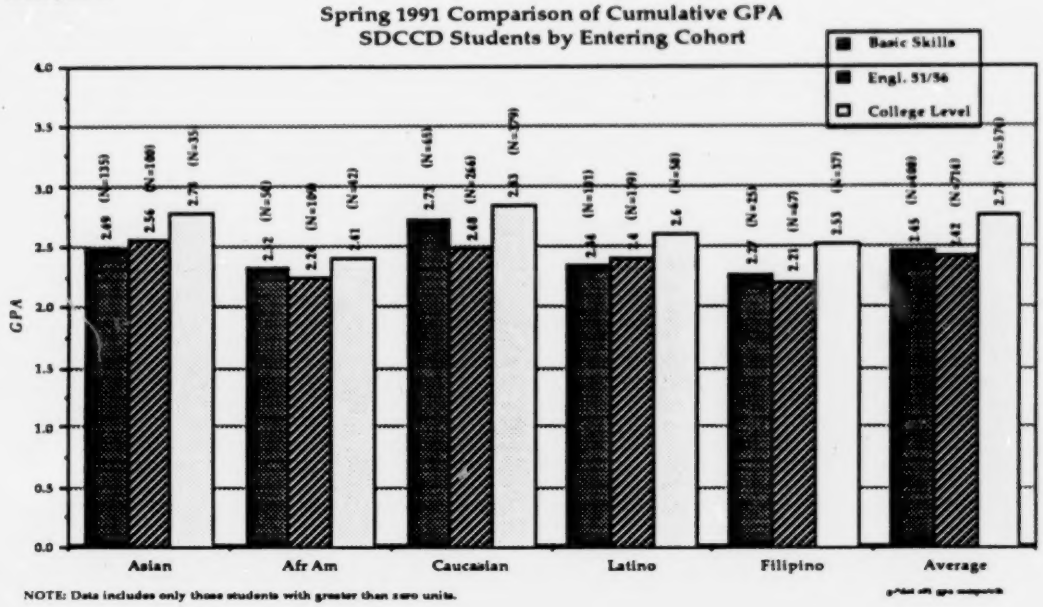
Graph 8



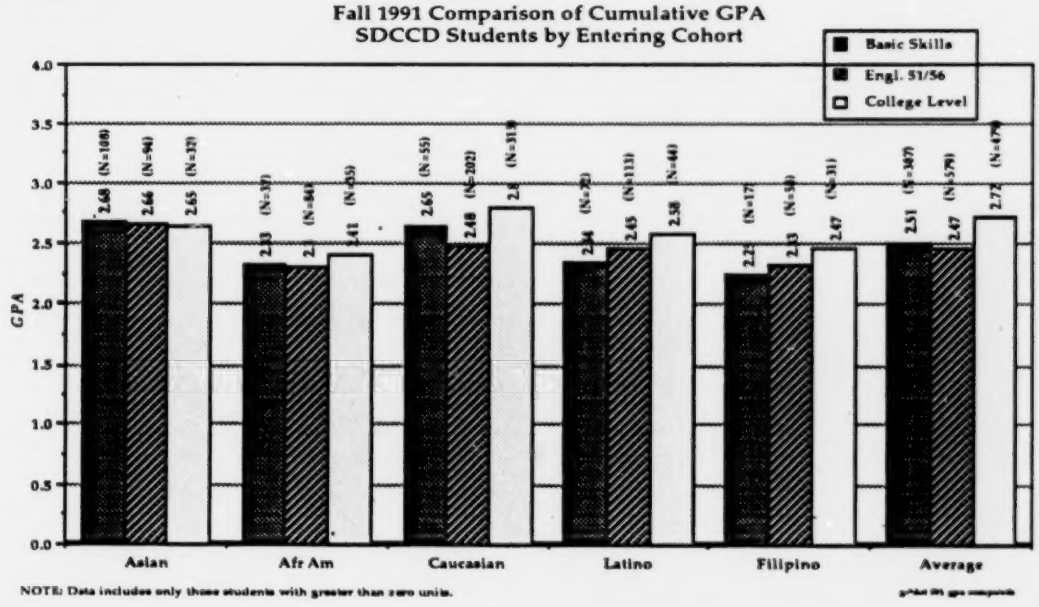
NOTE: Data includes only those students with greater than zero units.

(Cumulative Grade Point Average by Ethnicity Continued)

Graph 9



Graph 10



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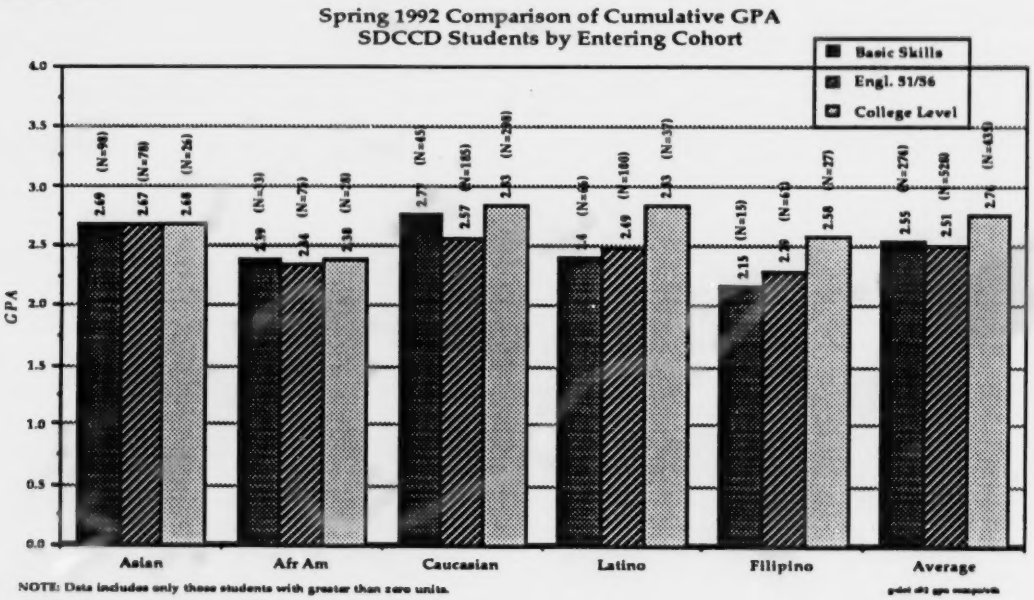
(Cumulative GPA Comparison by Ethnicity Continued)

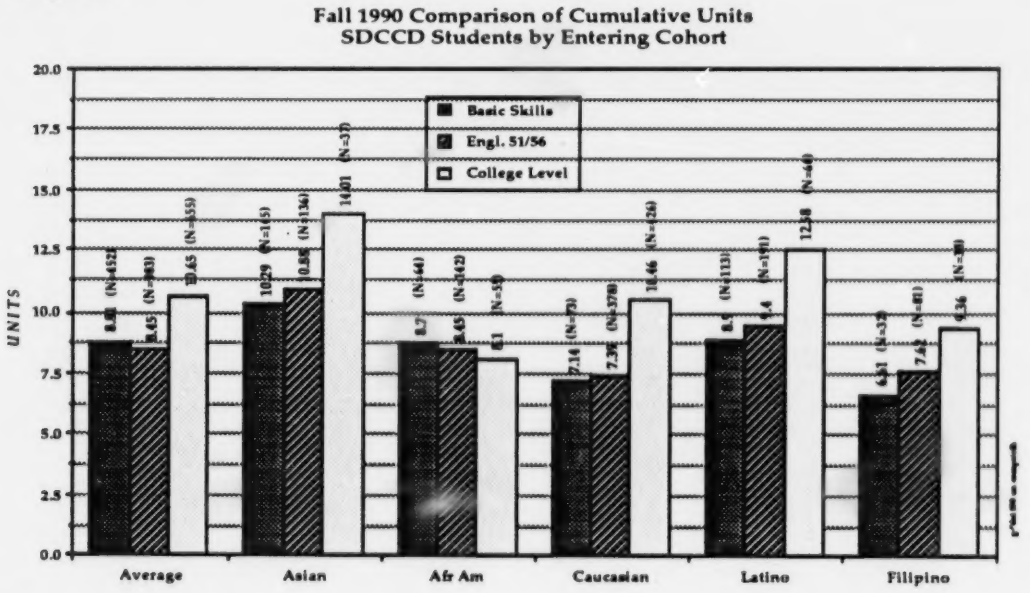
Graph 11



Cumulative Units Earned by Ethnicity

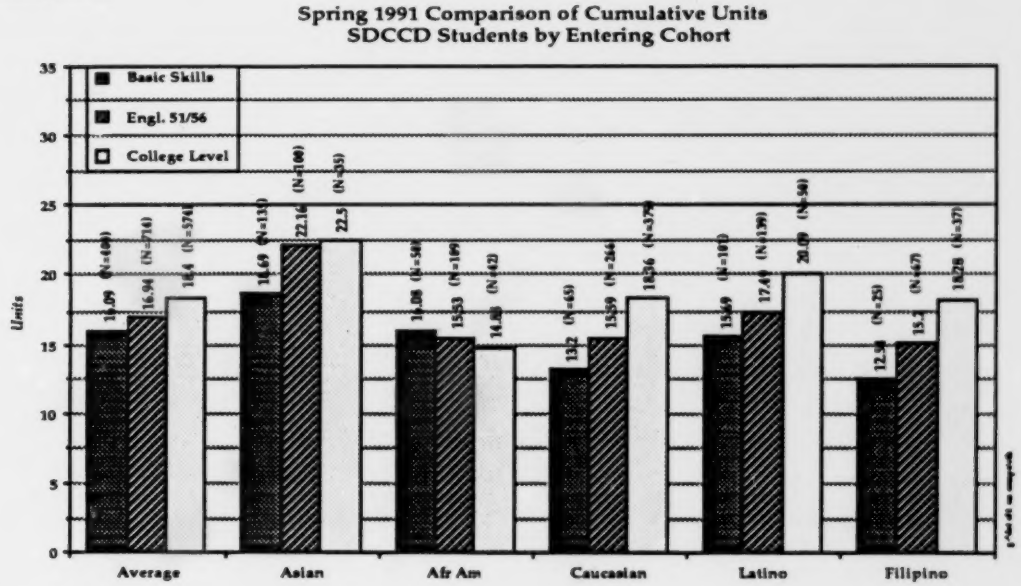
Analyzing four semesters of cumulative units showed, on average, no statistically significant differences between basic skills English and English 51/56 entrants, and significant differences between college level entrants and the pre-collegiate groups only for the first two semesters. Beginning with the third semester of attendance, cumulative units attained were virtually identical for all groups. Differences were more pronounced within and among ethnic groups, as shown in the graphs below.

Graph 12

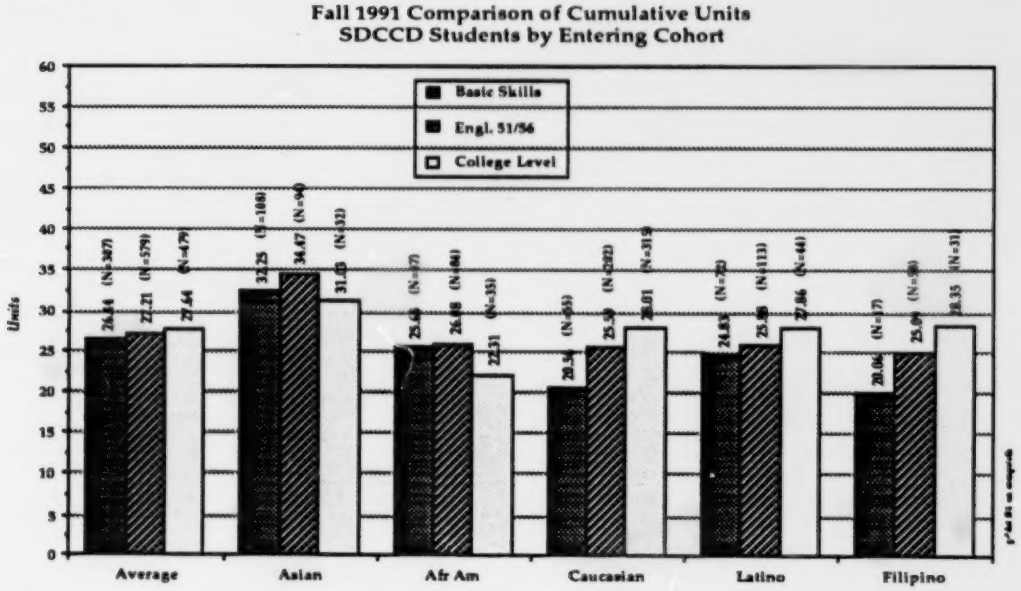


(Cumulative Unit Comparison by Ethnicity Continued)

Graph 13

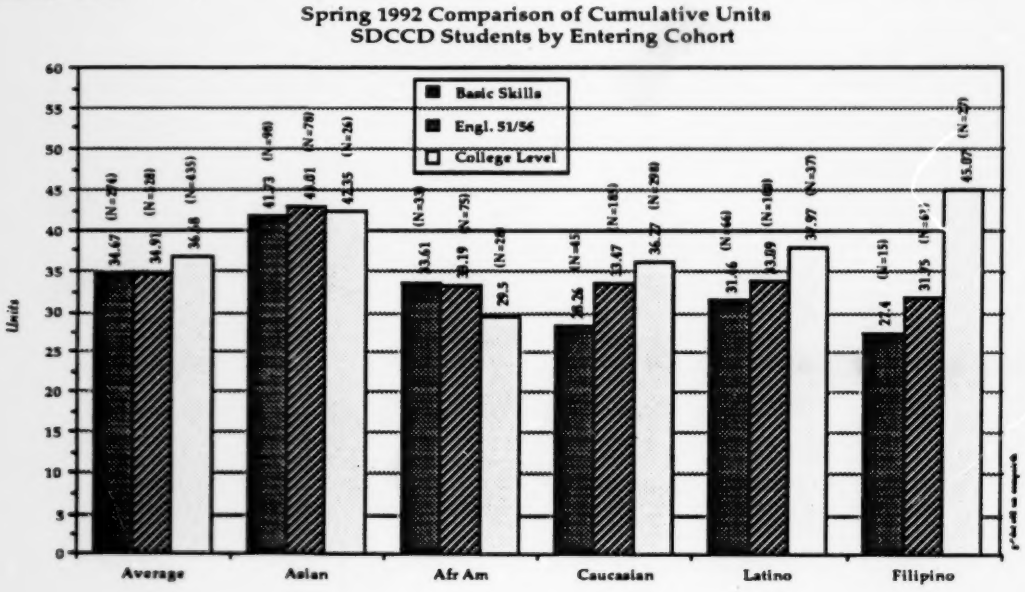


Graph 14



(Cumulative Unit Comparison by Ethnicity Continued)

Graph 15



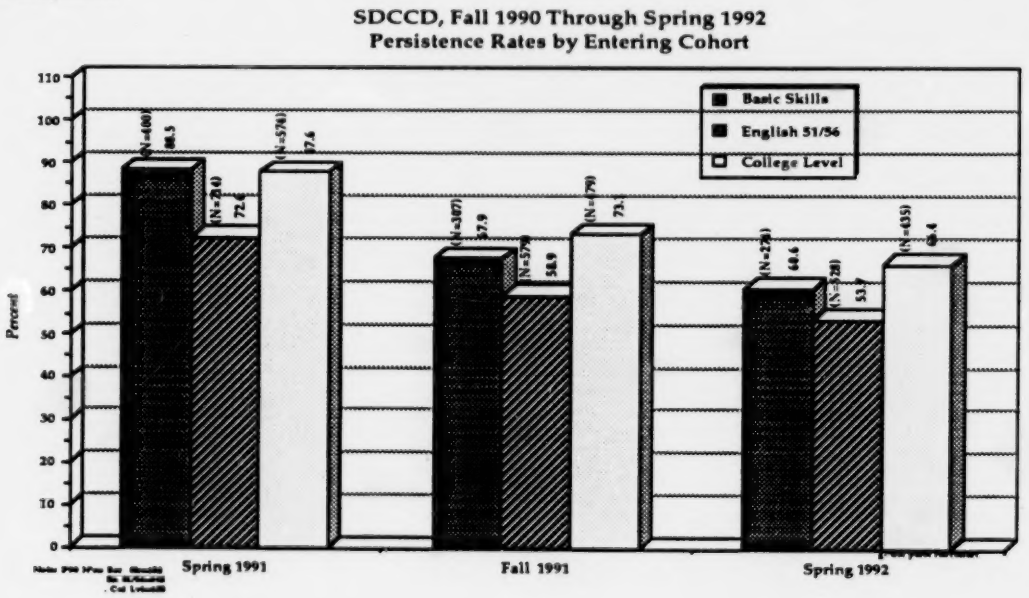
Persistence

Semester-to-Semester Rates

Persistence is defined as the rate of progression from a given semester to subsequent semesters. This analysis again excludes students who earned zero units.

Persistence Rates by Entering English Cohort

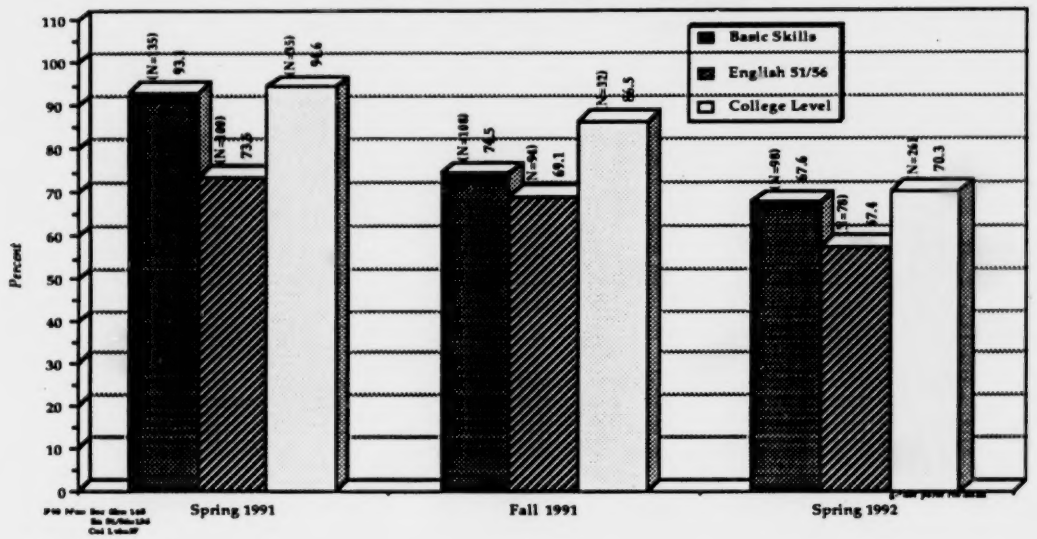
Graph 16



Semester-to-Semester Rates by Ethnicity

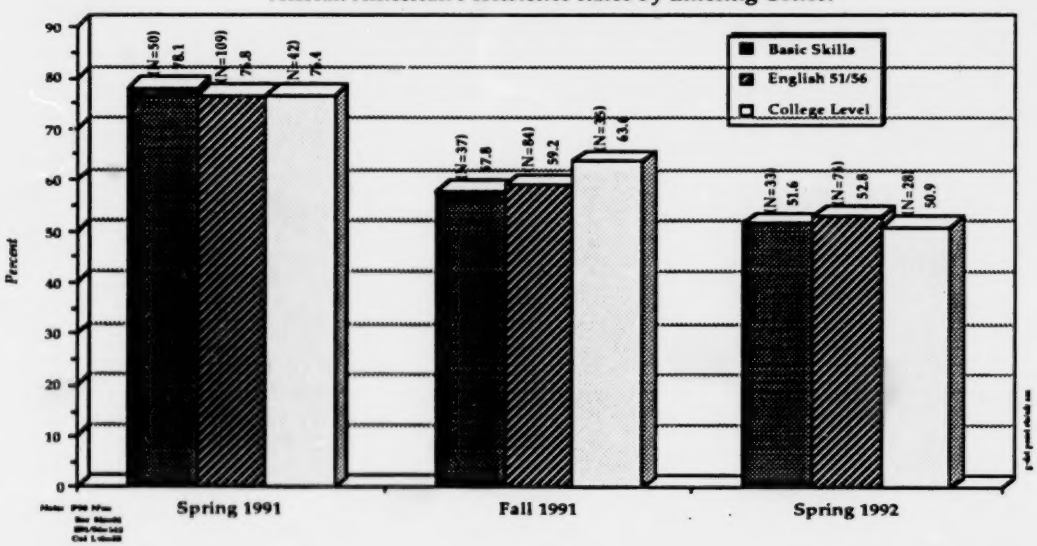
Graph 17

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
Asian Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



Graph 18

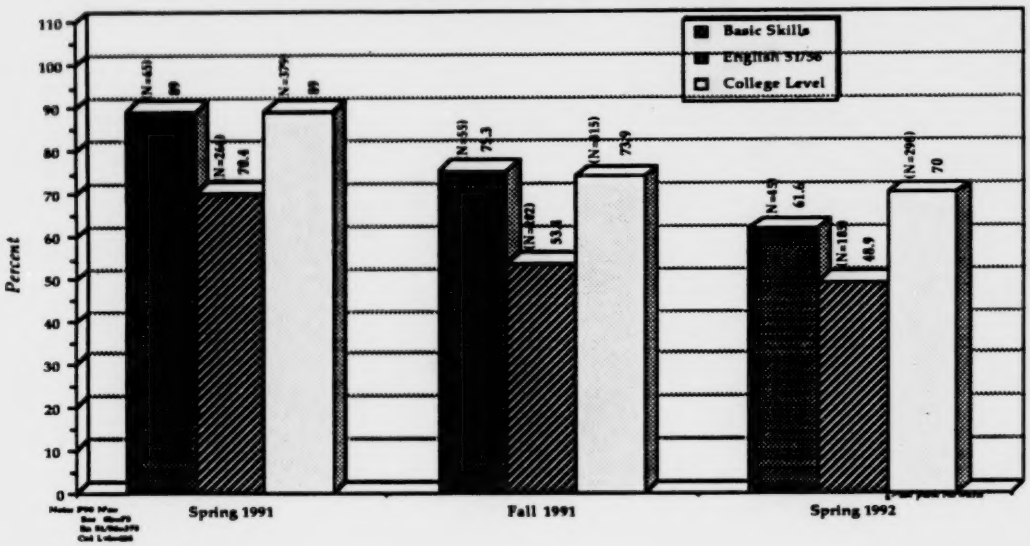
SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
African American Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



(Semester-to-Semester Rates by Ethnicity Continued)

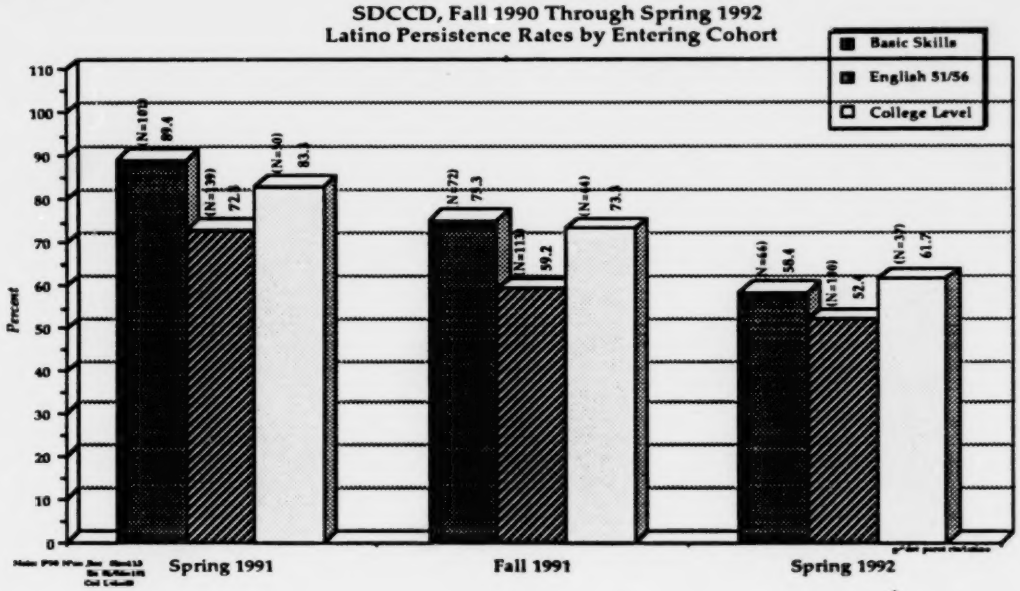
Graph 19

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
Caucasian Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



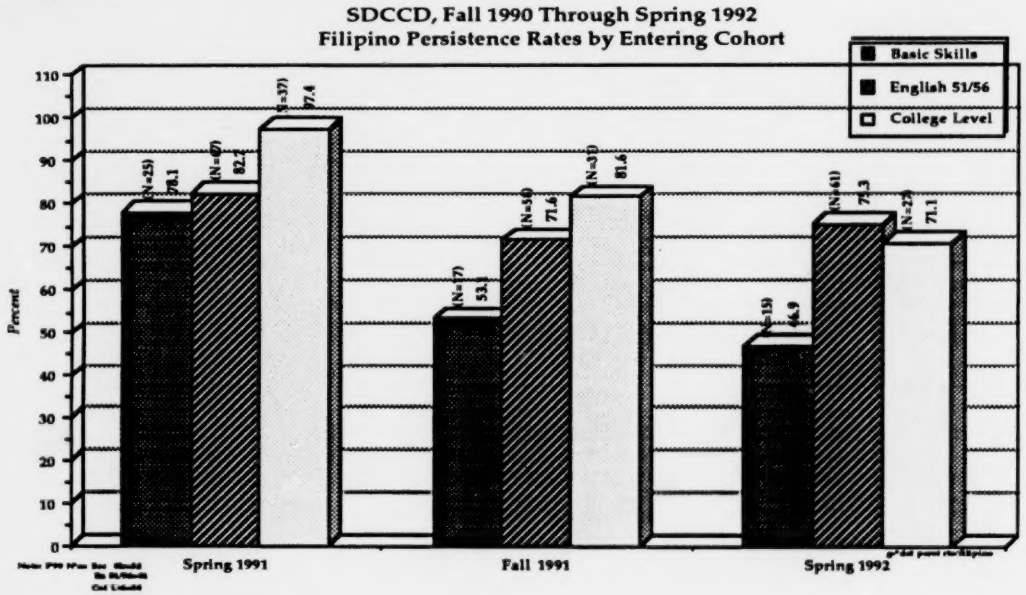
Graph 20

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
Latino Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



(Semester-to-Semester Rates by Ethnicity Continued)

Graph 21



The data show that English 51/56 students had poorer persistence rates than the basic skills and college level students, however, this pattern was not consistent across ethnic categories. These data may provide a basis for designing programs that improve persistence for specific ethnic groups since it appears that program needs may vary by group.

Progression to College Level Courses From Basic Skills and English 51/56

The following tables show that, when considering total enrollment, there were only slight differences in the percentage of students who persisted to and successfully completed college level courses after beginning in basic skills English or English 51/56. Again, the differences for a specific ethnic group may be substantial. It is also interesting to note that nearly 60% of students in both categories successfully complete one or more college level classes in their first term of enrollment, in other words, during the same term in which they enroll in the basic skills or English 51/56 course. Beginning with the Spring 1991 term, students initially enrolled in basic skills English actually persisted to college level courses at higher rates than students who began in English 51/56 courses.

Table 1

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 Basic Skills Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses in Subsequent Terms

Basic Skills	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
Amer. Ind.	6	3	50.0	2	33.3	2	33.3
Asian/Pac Is	141	89	63.1	81	57.4	75	53.2
African Amer.	62	31	50.0	29	46.8	25	40.3
Caucasian	73	35	47.9	35	47.9	29	39.7
Latino	111	64	57.7	40	36.0	44	39.6
Filipino	32	12	37.5	11	34.4	10	31.3
Total/Average	441	245	55.6	206	46.9	193	43.8

Note: "Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Table 2

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 English 51/56 Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses in and Subsequent Terms

Engl. 51/56	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
Amer. Ind.	15	9	60.0	6	40.0	7	46.6
Asian/Pac Is	84	81	60.0	79	58.5	64	47.4
African Amer.	91	71	56.6	63	46.7	52	38.5
Caucasian	207	195	51.5	161	42.5	143	37.7
Latino	120	99	53.5	86	46.5	78	42.2
Filipino	43	44	54.3	48	59.3	49	60.5
Total/Average	578	515	52.6	462	47.1	409	41.7

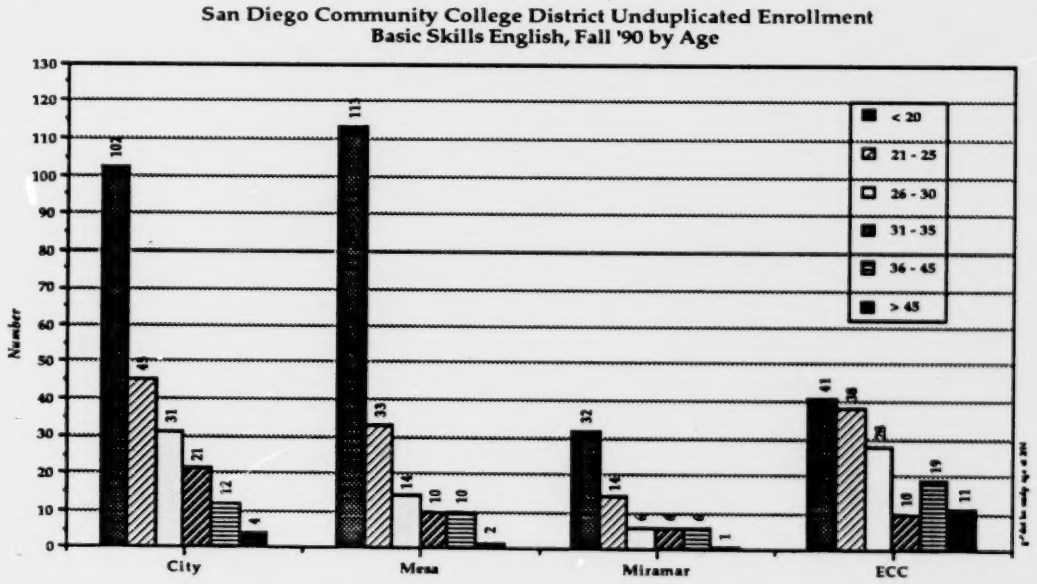
Note: " Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Part II: Performance by Age

Fall 1990 English Enrollment by Age

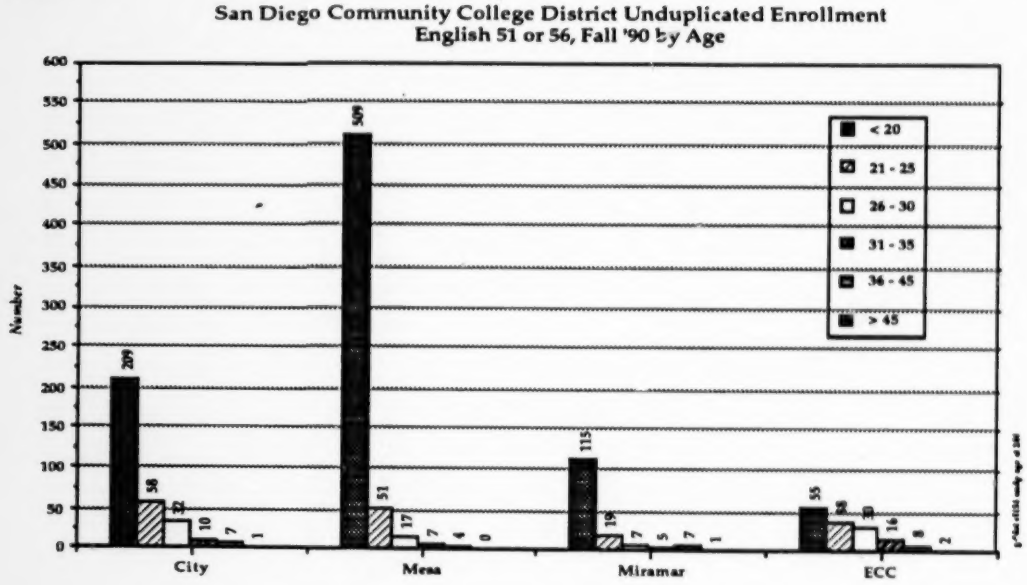
The majority of the students in the study (57%) were 20 years of age or younger. This was consistent with the student population as 58.4% of Fall 1990 first-time students were age 20 or under. Students entering basic skills English tended to be older, as only 37.8% of students in the cohort were age 20 or under. 64.9% of English 51/56 entrants were age 20 or under, and 59.9% of college level English entrants were age 20 or under.

Graph 22

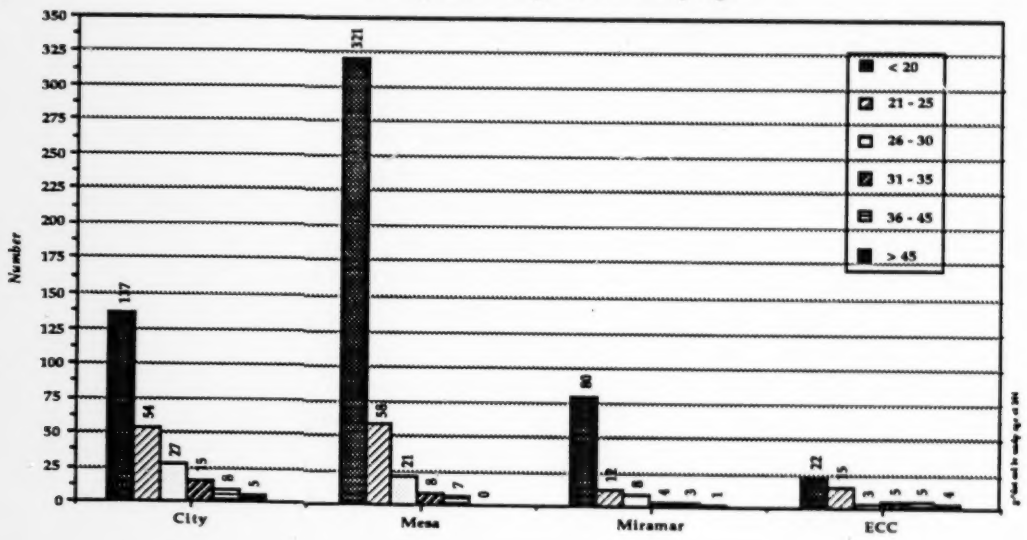


(Fall 1990, Enrollment by Age Continued)

Graph 23



Graph 24

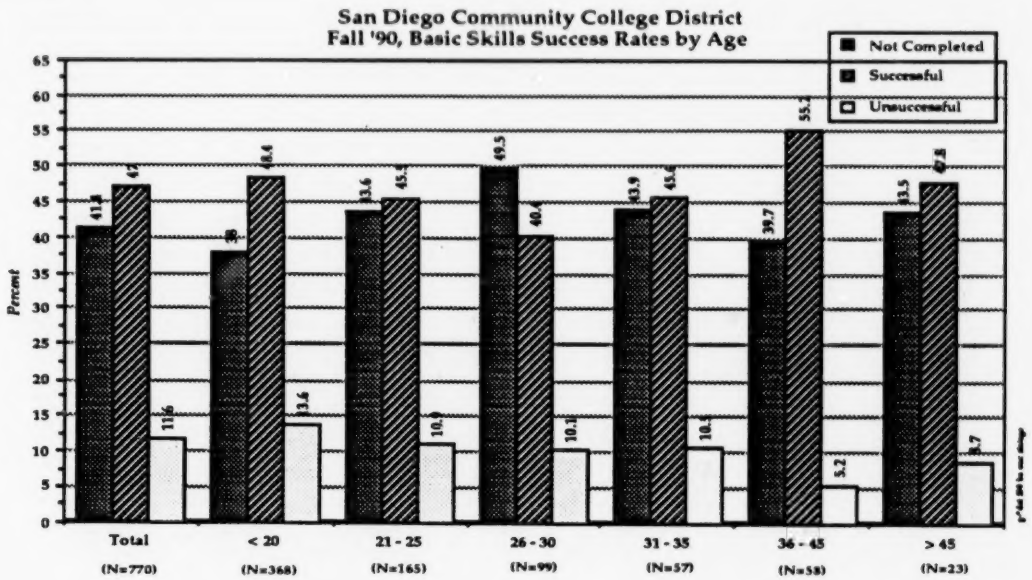


Course Success Rates

Comparing student performance by course success rates shows that students age 20 or under tended to have lower rates of non-completion (drops or grades of 'W') than older students, but in many cases also were more likely to earn an unsuccessful grade (D, F, NC, or I). In the basic skills cohort, students age 36 to 45 had the highest success rates (55.2%) and the lowest rates of unsuccessful grades (5.2%), while students age 26 to 30 had the lowest success rates (40.4%) and the highest non-completion rates (49.5%). For English 51/56 entrants, students over age 45 appear to have performed better than the other age groups with 80% earning a successful grade and 20% earning an unsuccessful grade. However, the limited number of students in this group (N=5) would cast doubt on the conclusiveness of these results. Students in the under 20 age category performed better than those between age 21 and 45 years of age, with a success rate of 56.1% and non-completion rate of 32.5%. For college level entrants, students under age 20 had lower rates of success than all groups except the 21 to 25 and over 45 age groups. Again, the limited number of students over age 45 (N=11) may invalidate the results.

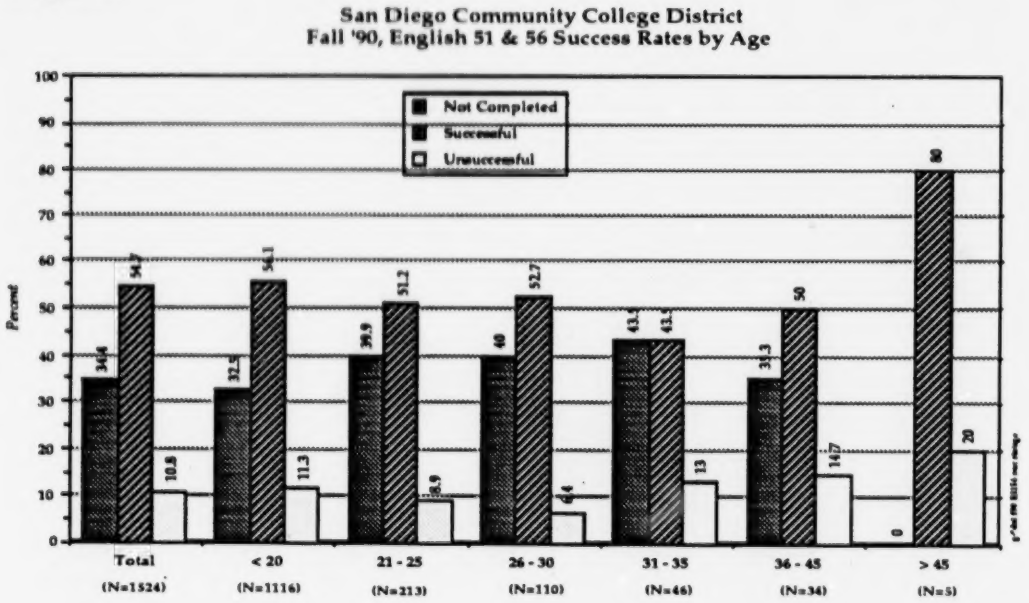
Success Rates by Age

Graph 25

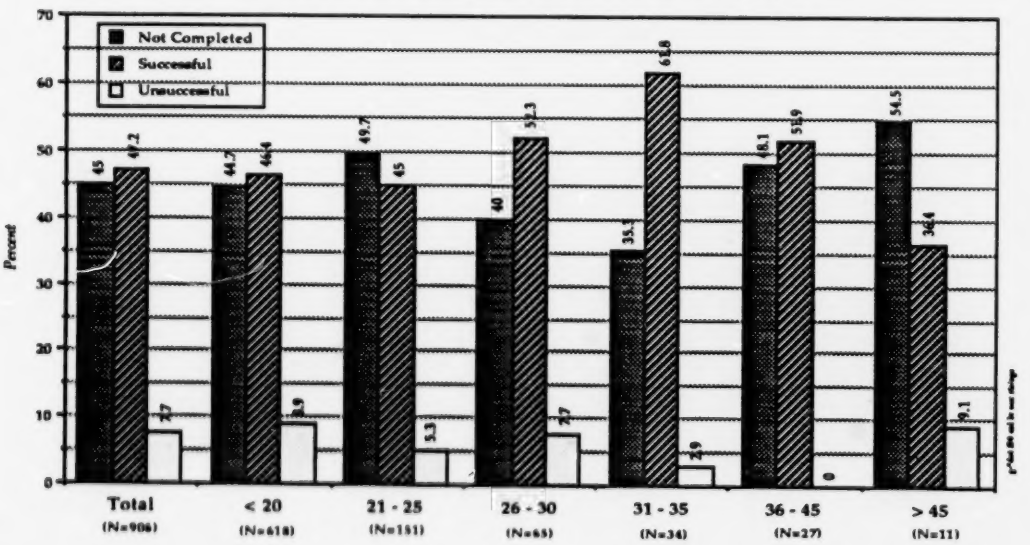


(Success Rates by Age Continued)

Graph 26



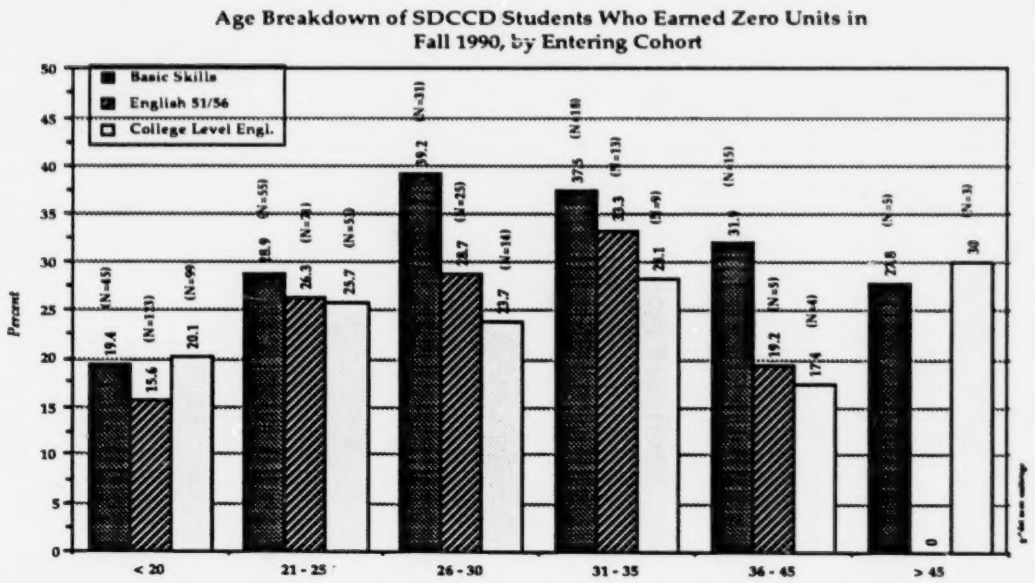
Graph 27



Percentage of Students Earning Zero Units in Fall, 1990

For all categories above 20 years of age, students in the basic skills cohort were more likely to earn zero units during the Fall, 1990 semester than students in higher level English cohorts. Students age 20 or under were less likely than older students to earn zero units, regardless of entering English level. The above comments exclude those categories having very low numbers of students (N<10), for which generalizations may be unreliable.

Graph 28

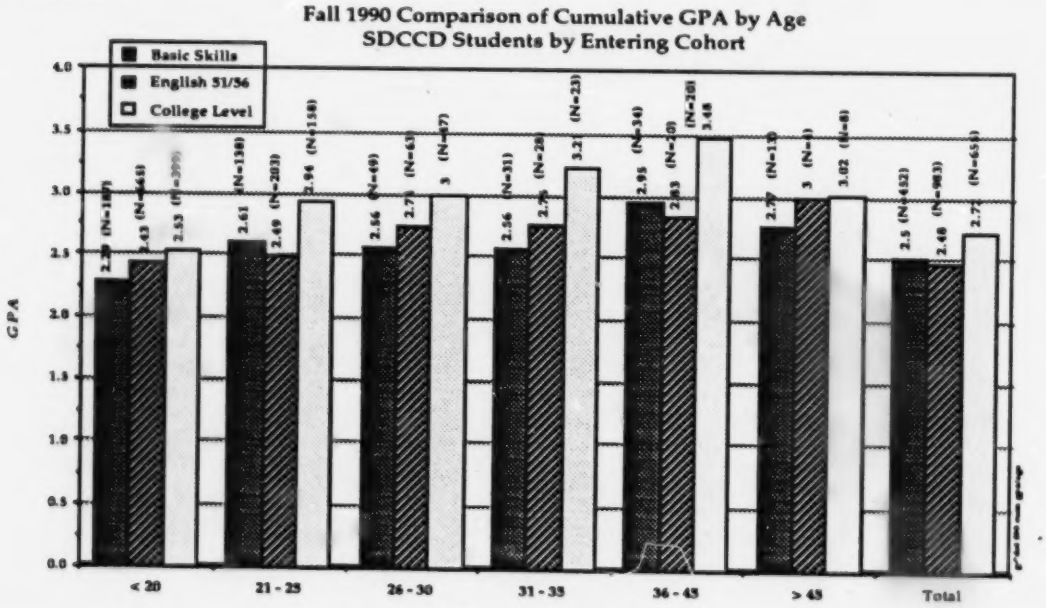


Course Performance and Progression

Cumulative Grade Point Average by Entering Age Cohort

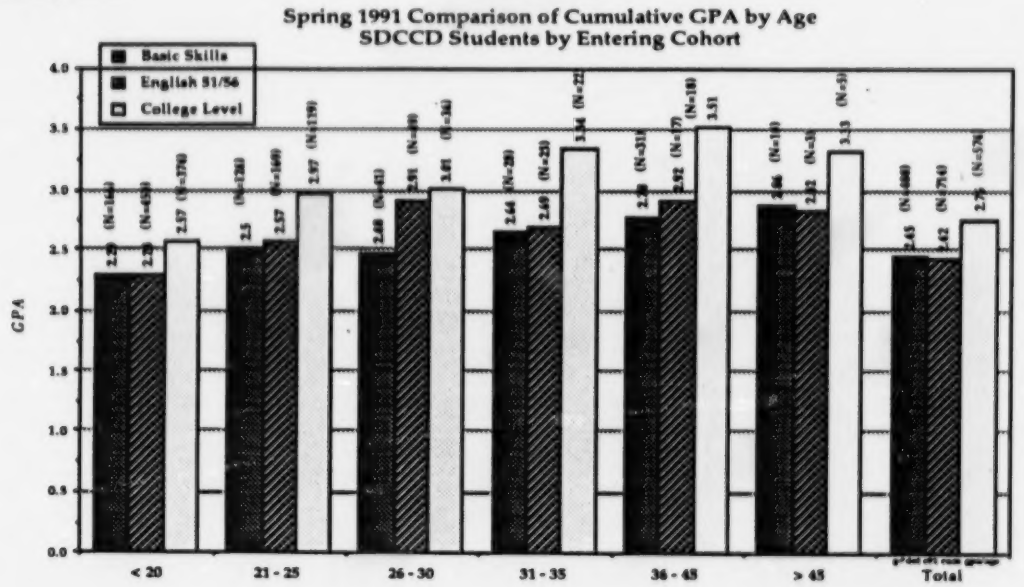
Tracking cumulative grade point average by entering cohort over four semesters reveals that students entering English at the college level outperformed students in the lower level English cohorts. The graphs below also reveal that cumulative GPA rose with age up to age 45, when it declined slightly. By the fourth semester (Spring 1992), students in the age 36-45 group had a grade point average approximately one grade point higher than students in the 20 and below group.

Graph 29

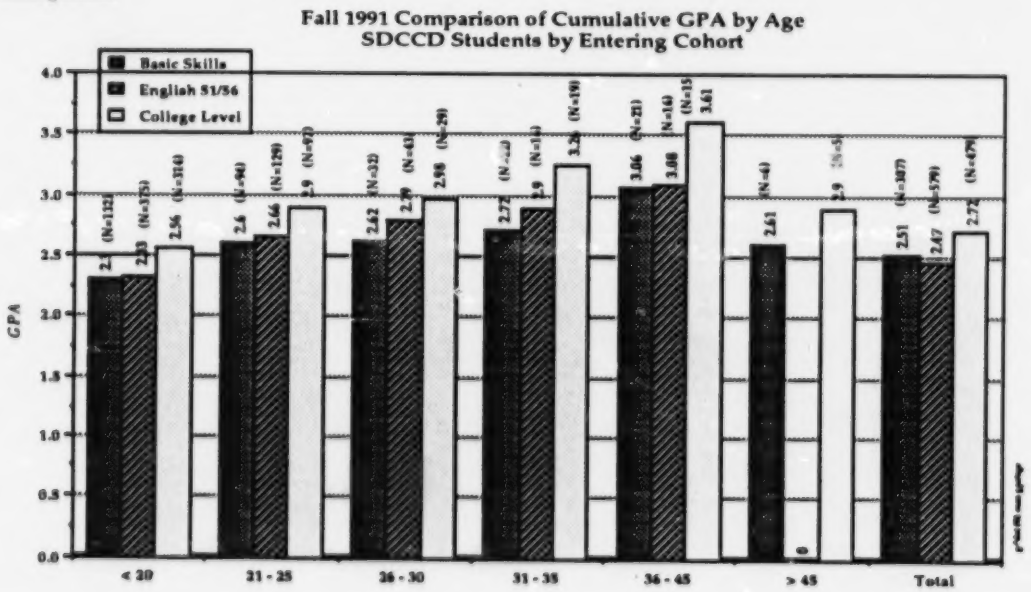


(Cumulative GPA Comparison by Age Continued)

Graph 30

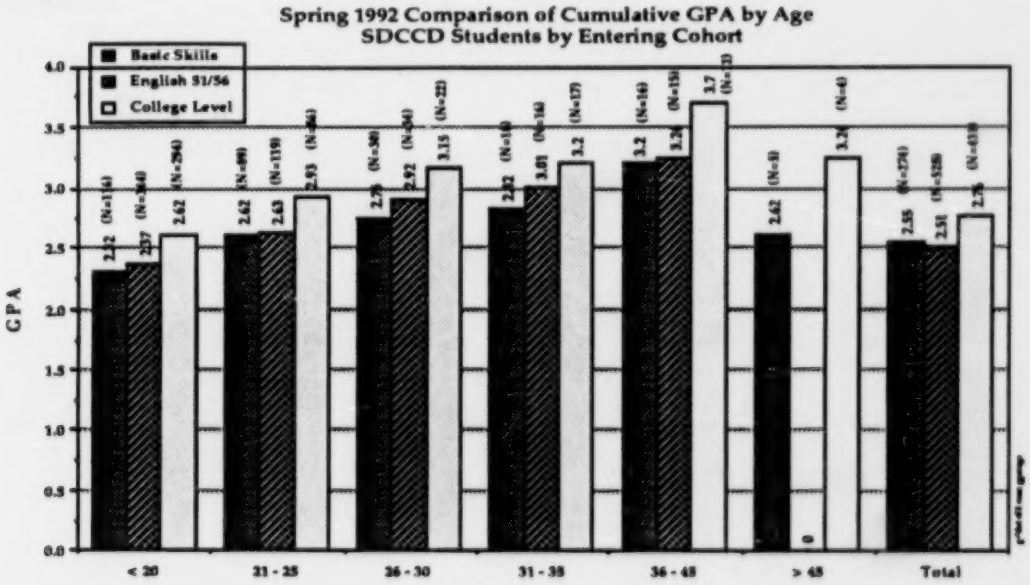


Graph 31



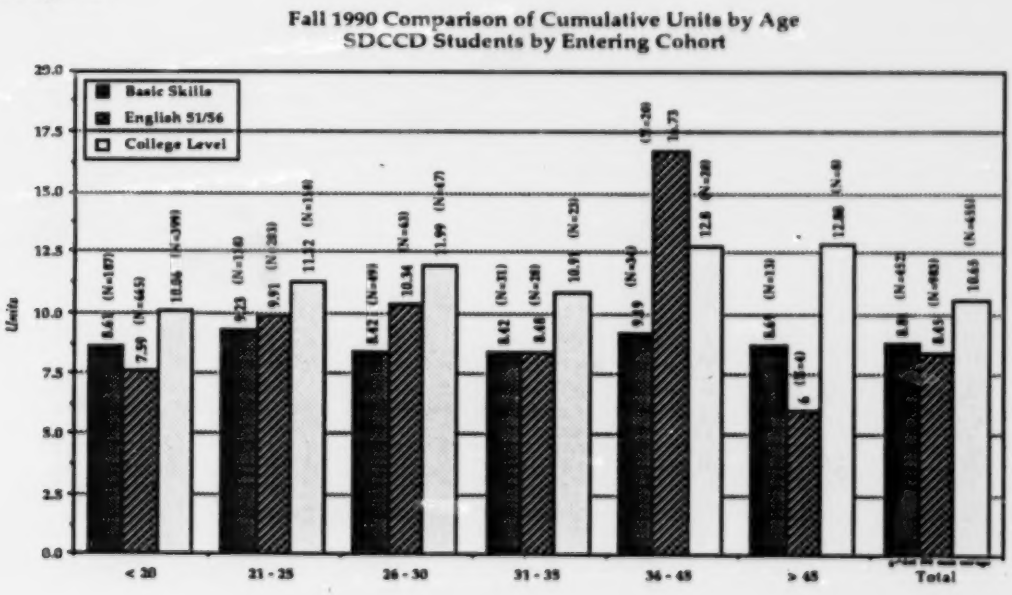
(Cumulative GPA Comparison by Age Continued)

Graph 32



Cumulative Units Earned by Age

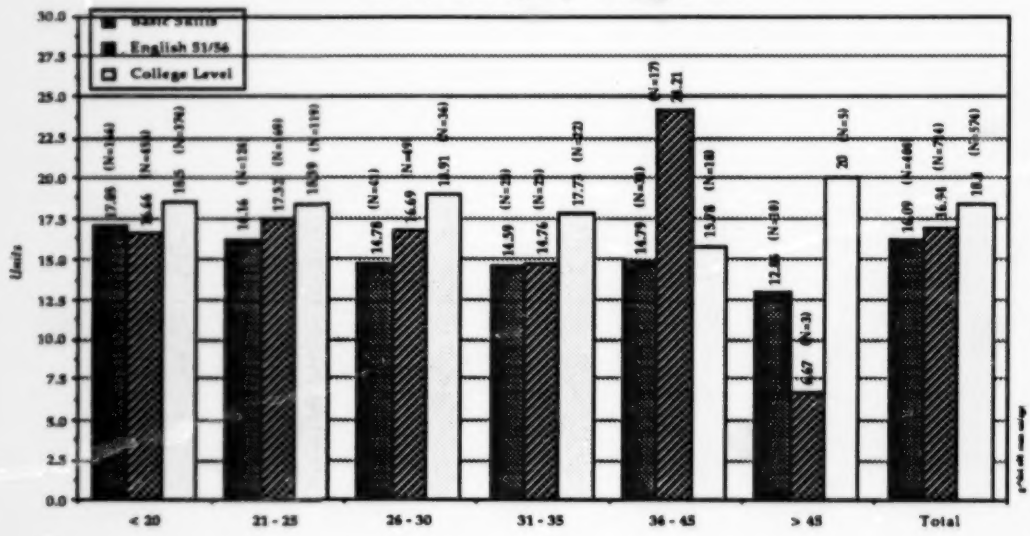
Graph 33



(Cumulative Units Earned by Age Continued)

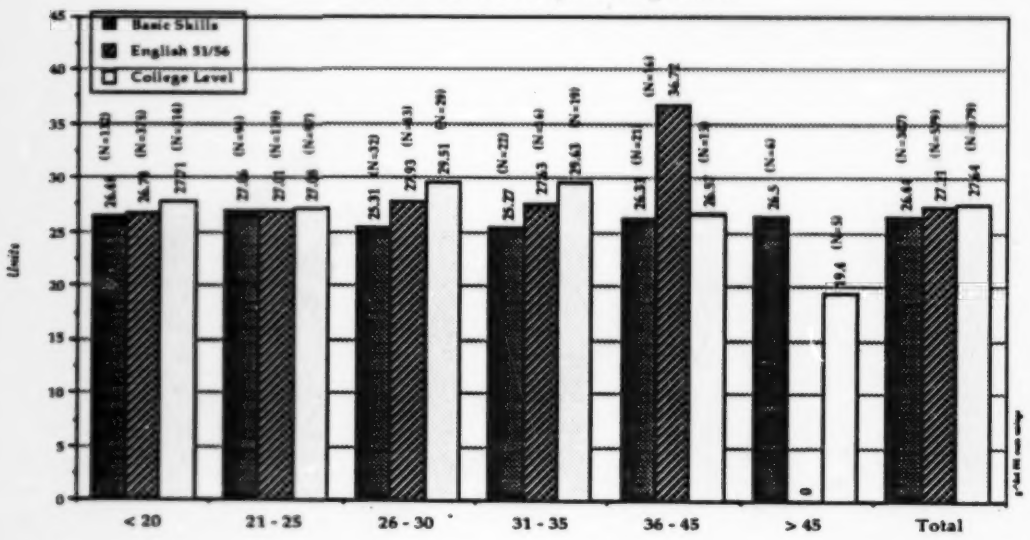
Graph 34

Spring 1991 Comparison of Cumulative Units by Age
SDCCD Students by Entering Cohort



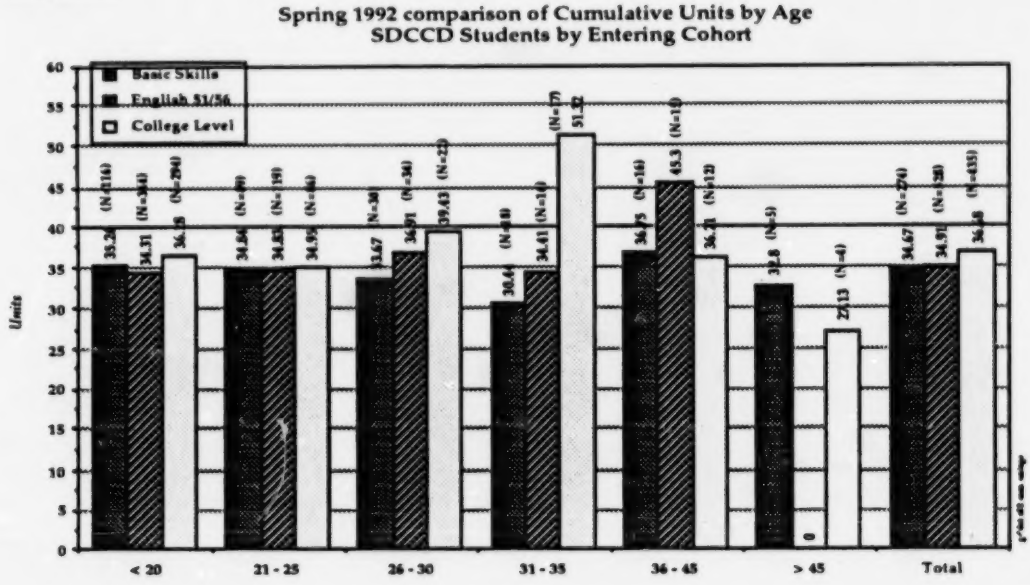
Graph 35

Fall 1991 Comparison of Cumulative Units by Age
SDCCD Students by Entering Cohort



(Cumulative Units Earned by Age Continued)

Graph 36

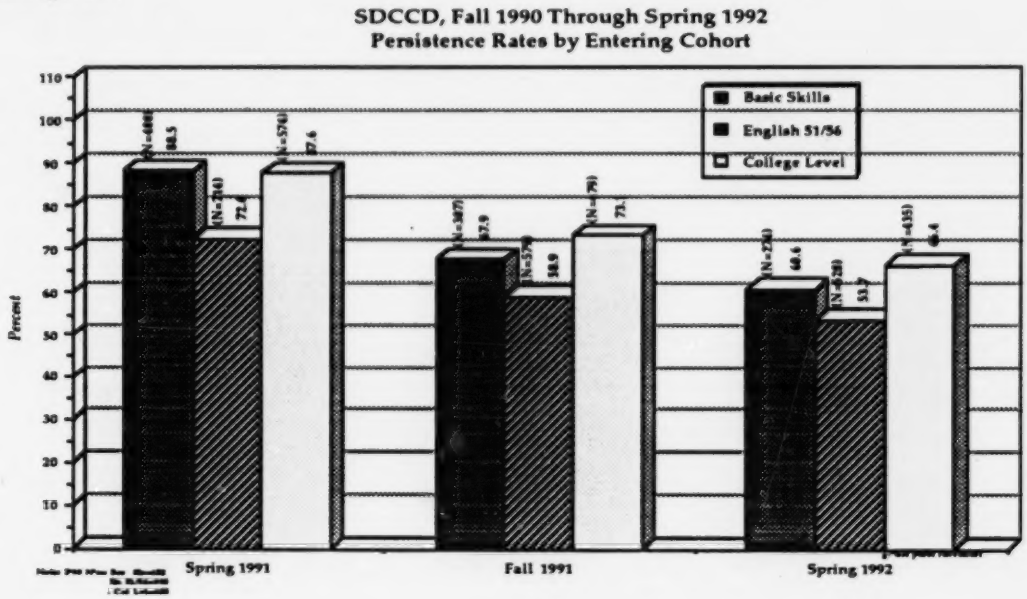


Persistence

Semester-to-Semester Rates by Age Category

Persistence is defined as the progression from the Fall 1990 semester to subsequent semesters, and excludes students with zero cumulative units.

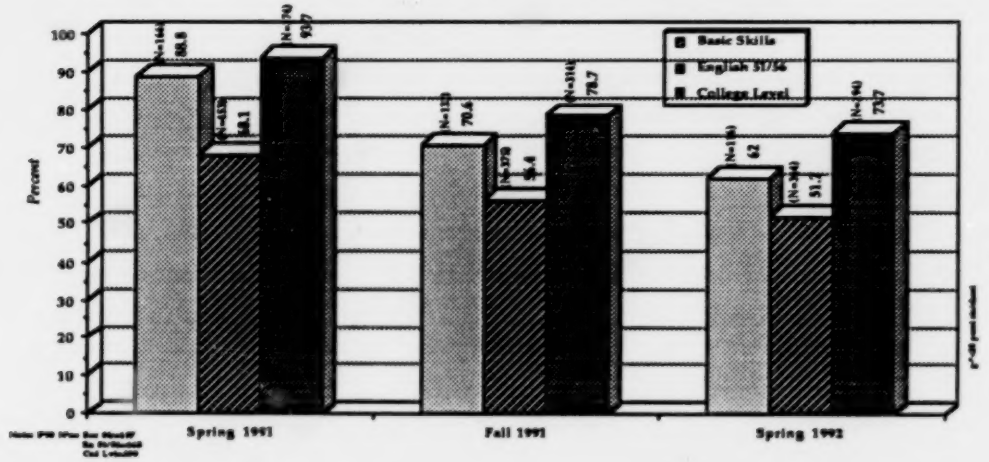
Graph 37



(Semester-to-Semester Rates by Age Category Continued)

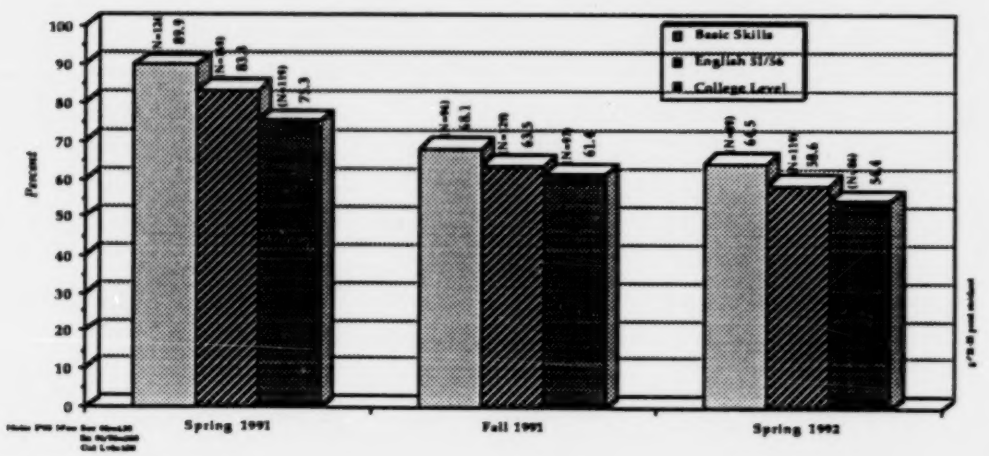
Graph 38

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
<20 Years, Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



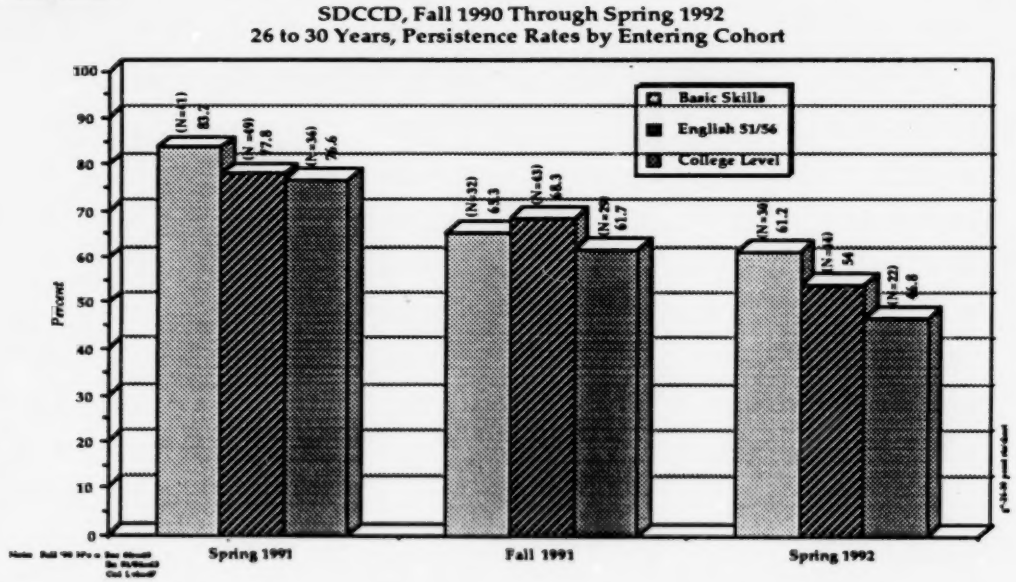
Graph 39

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
21 to 25 Years, Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort

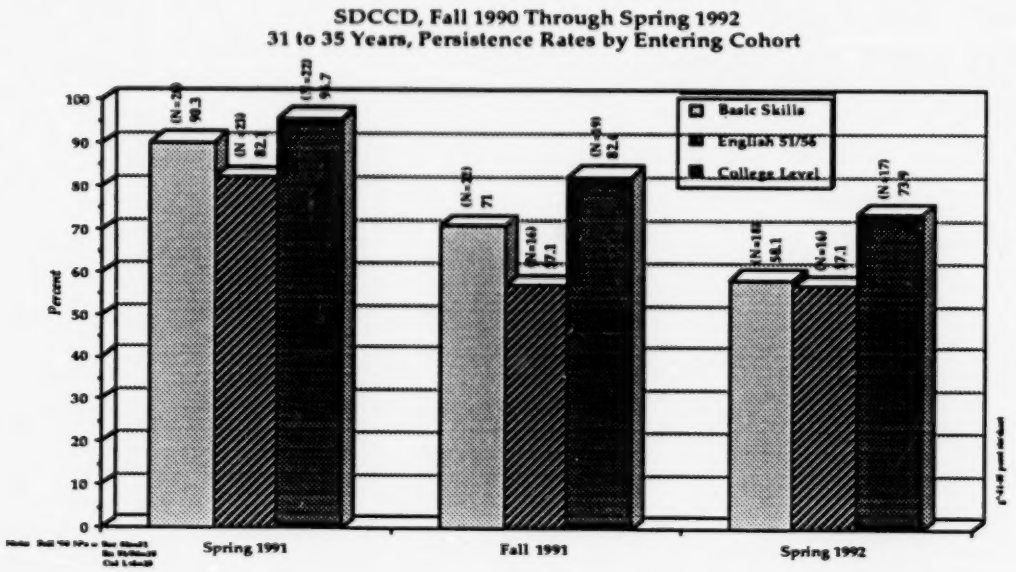


(Semester-to-Semester Rates by Age Category Continued)

Graph 40



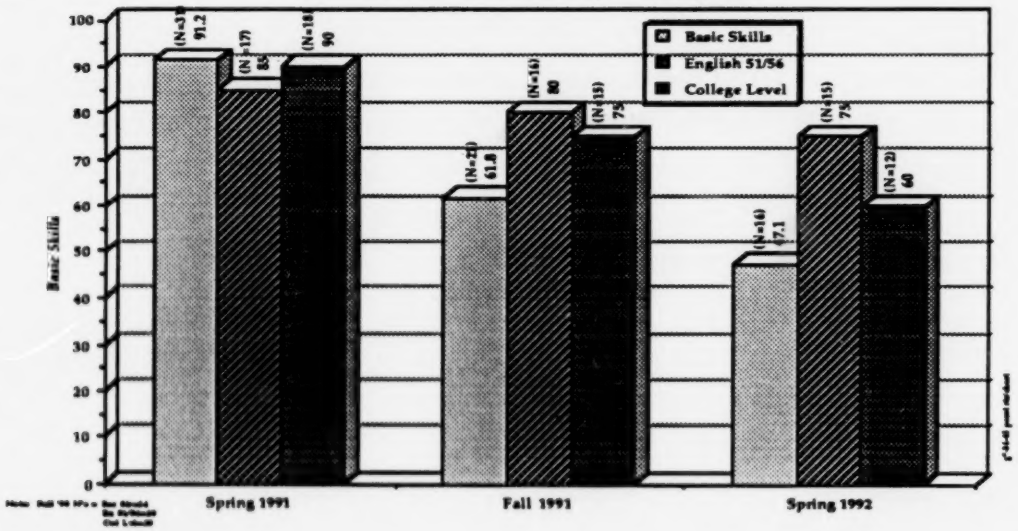
Graph 41



(Semester-to-Semester Rates by Age Category Continued)

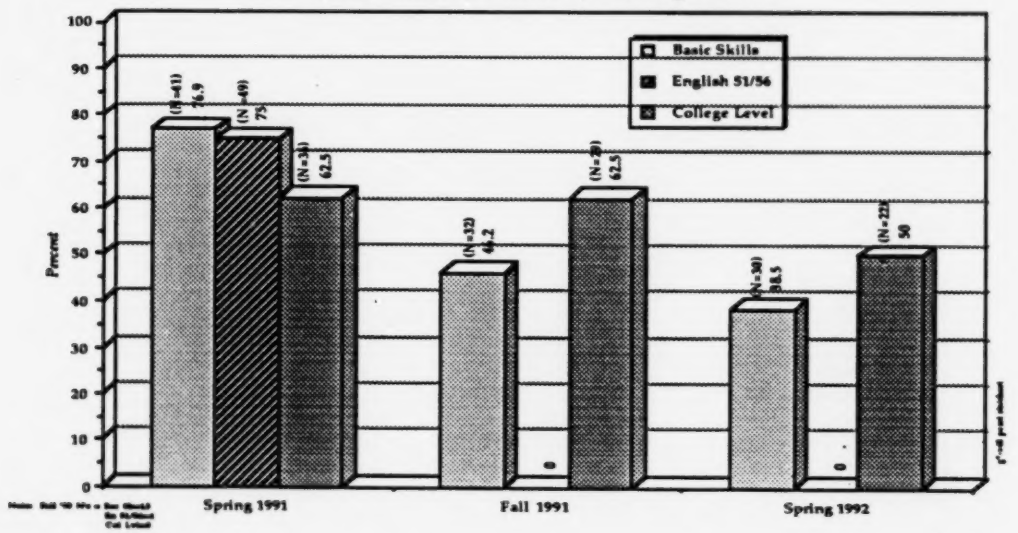
Graph 42

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
36 to 45 Years, Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



Graph 43

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
> 45 Years, Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



Progression to College Level Courses From Basic Skills and English 51/56

There were relatively minor differences between basic skills and English 51/56 entrants in terms of subsequent progression to and success in college level courses. For the basic skills entrants, students under age 20 had a higher rate of progression to college level courses than students in any other age cohort. Interestingly enough, the exact opposite was true for students in the English 51/56 cohort. Students under age 20 progressed to the college level at *lower* rates than students in the older age categories, and in fact successfully completed college level courses at lower rates than even the under-20 age group in the basic skills cohort. Students over age 45 fared poorly in comparison to other categories; however, this may be a result of the small number of students in the group (basic skills N=13, 51/56 N=4).

Table 3

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 Basic Skills Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses in Subsequent Terms, by Age

Fall '90 Basic Skills	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
< 20	185	117	62.6	96	51.3	87	46.5
21 - 25	134	71	51.4	63	45.7	64	46.4
26 - 30	48	20	40.8	20	40.8	18	36.7
31 - 35	29	12	38.7	15	48.0	12	38.7
36 - 45	32	17	50.0	13	38.2	14	41.2
> 45	13	5	38.5	5	38.5	3	23.1
Total/Average	441	242	53.5	212	46.9	198	43.8

Note: "Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Table 4

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 English 51/56 Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses in Subsequent Terms, by Age

Fall '90 Engl. 51/56	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
< 20	662	335	50.6	305	46.1	271	40.9
21 - 25	198	120	60.6	99	50.0	89	44.9
26 - 30	61	33	54.1	31	50.8	27	44.3
31 - 35	24	14	58.3	13	54.2	12	50.0
36 - 45	21	12	57.1	14	66.7	10	47.6
> 45	4	2	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total/Average	970	515	53.1	462	47.6	409	42.2

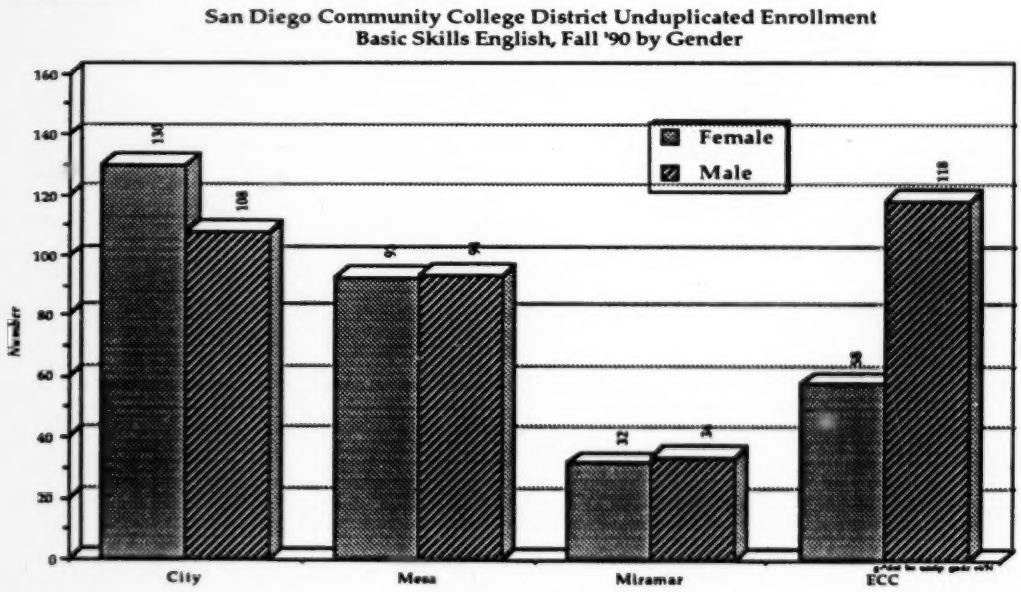
Note: " Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Part III: Performance by Gender

Fall 1990 English Enrollment by Gender

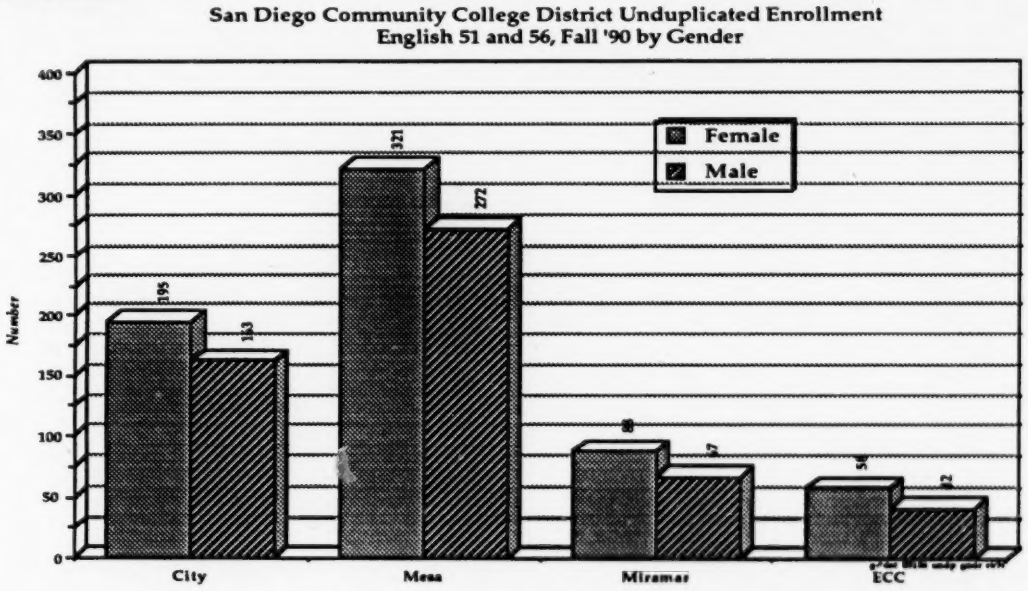
The following graphs show Fall 1990 enrollment by gender. Women were enrolled in English 51/56 in greater numbers than men, while men slightly outnumbered women in the college level cohort.

Graph 44

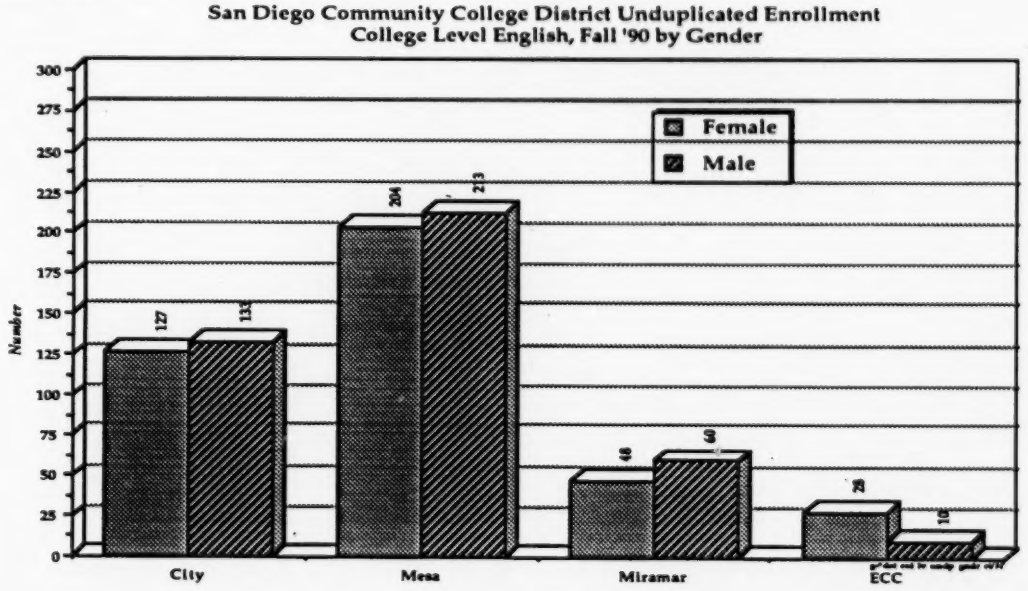


(Enrollment by Gender Continued)

Graph 45



Graph 46

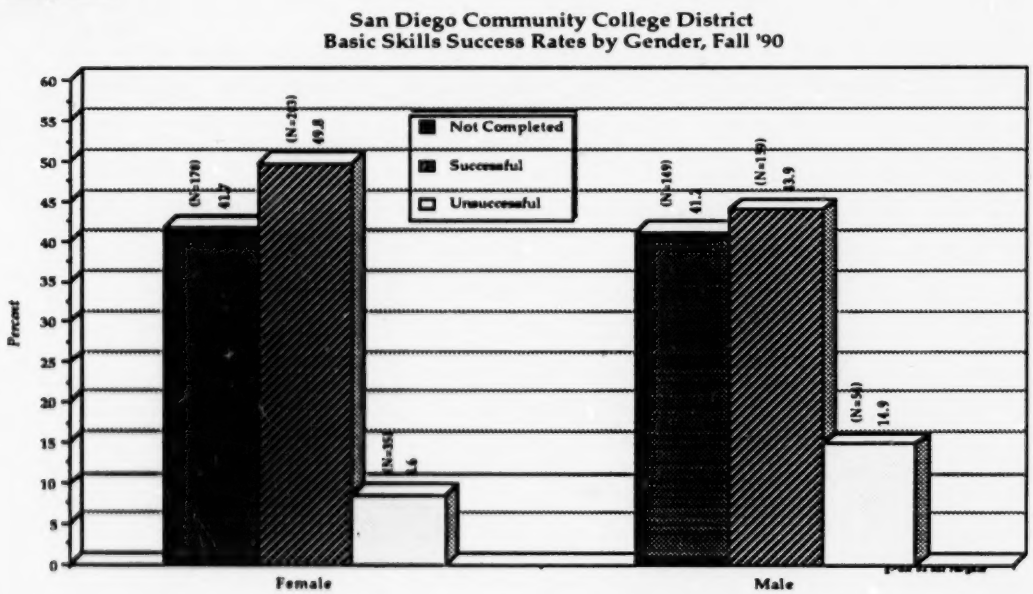


Course Success Rates

Women had higher percentages of successful grades (A, B, C, or CR) than men in all categories. Men were more likely to earn an unsuccessful grade (D, F, NC or I) than women at the basic skills and English 51/56 levels, but were slightly less likely to earn an unsuccessful grade at college level English. Rates of non-completion did not differ substantially between men and women.

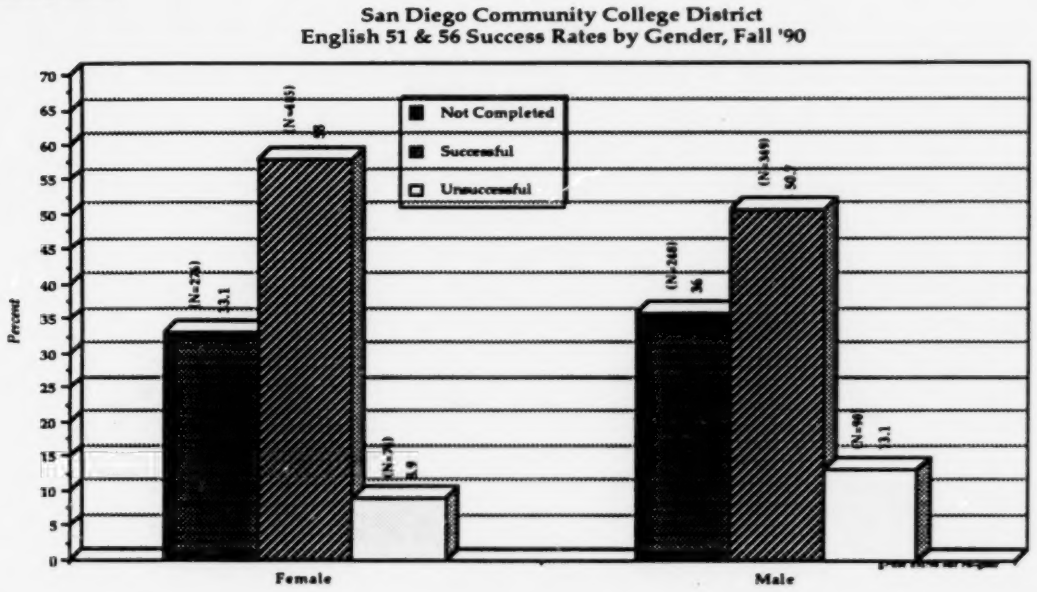
Success Rates by Gender

Graph 47

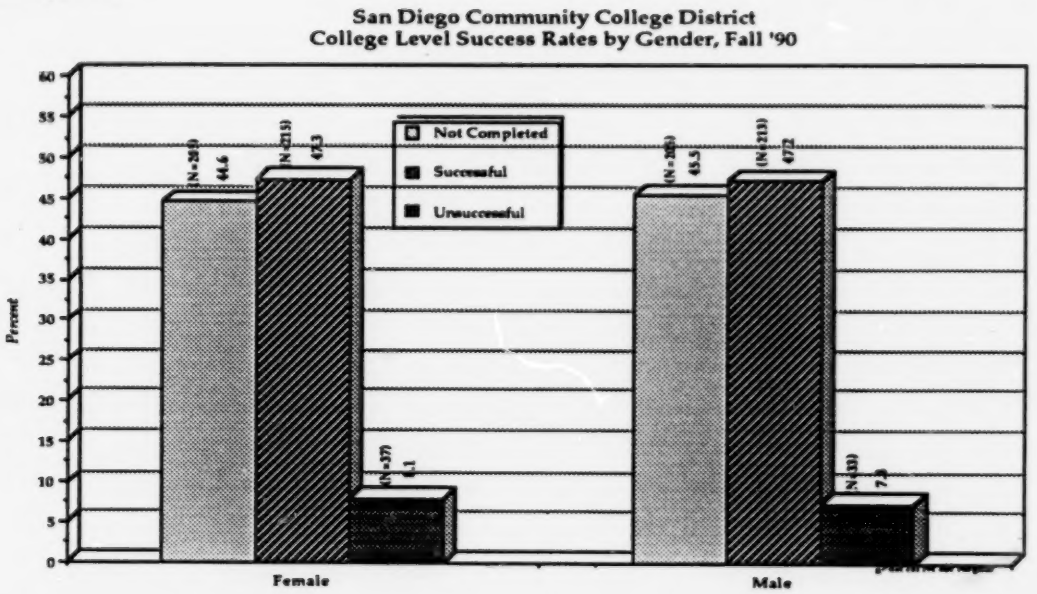


(English Course Success Rates by Gender Continued)

Graph 48



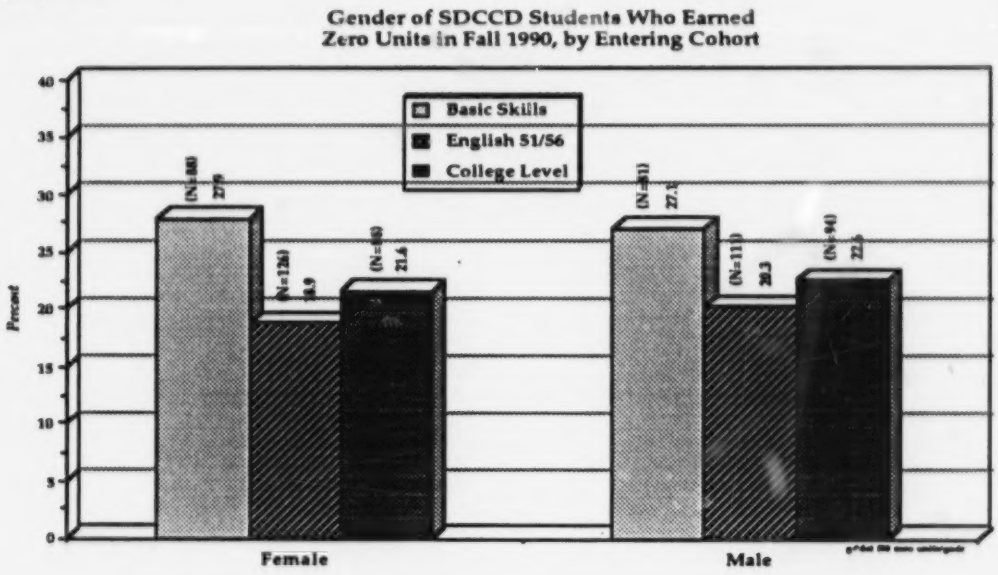
Graph 49



Percentage of Students Earning Zero Units in Fall, 1990

There were only minor differences between men and women in terms of zero unit attainment. At the basic skills level, 27.9% of women in the cohort earned zero units during the Fall 1990 semester compared to 27.1% of men. Women did slightly better at the higher English levels, as shown by the following graph.

Graph 50



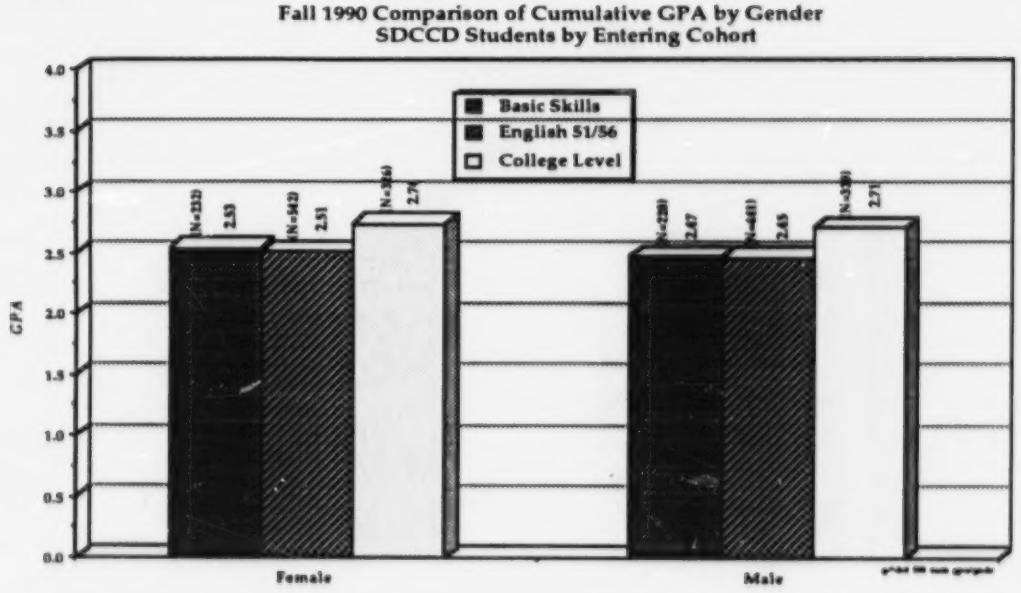
Course Performance and Progression

Cumulative Grade Point Average by Gender

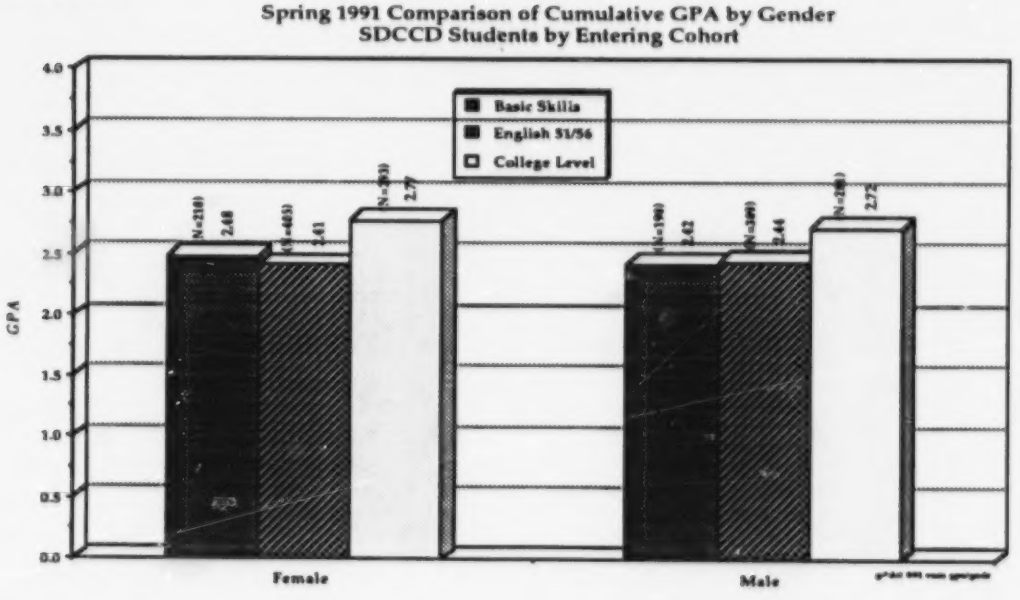
Women at every entering English level had a higher cumulative grade point average than men at the same level and in the same term. The differences were slight, exceeding one-tenth of a grade point only in a few cases. Performance of students in the college level cohort was consistently better than that of lower level English entrants, as referenced in Part I of this report. The data presented below for cumulative grade point average and cumulative units earned exclude students with cumulative units of zero.

(Cumulative Grade Point Average by Gender)

Graph 51

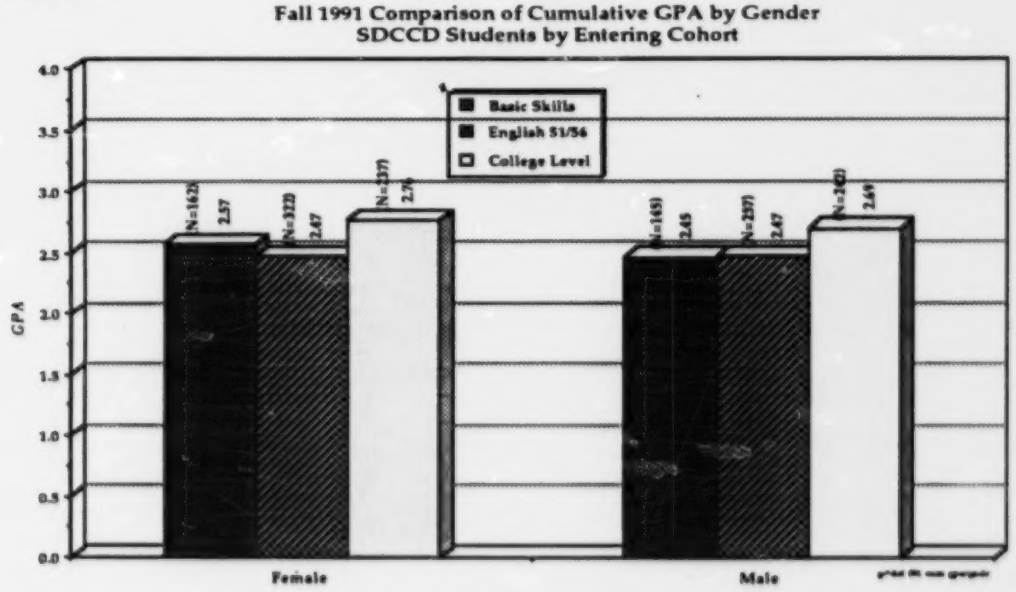


Graph 52

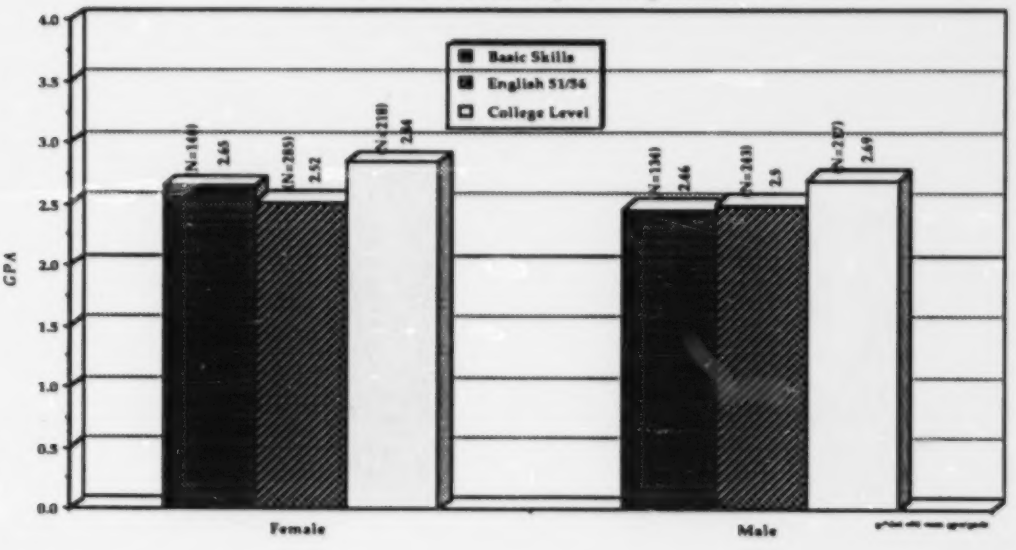


(Cumulative Grade Point Average by Gender Continued)

Graph 53



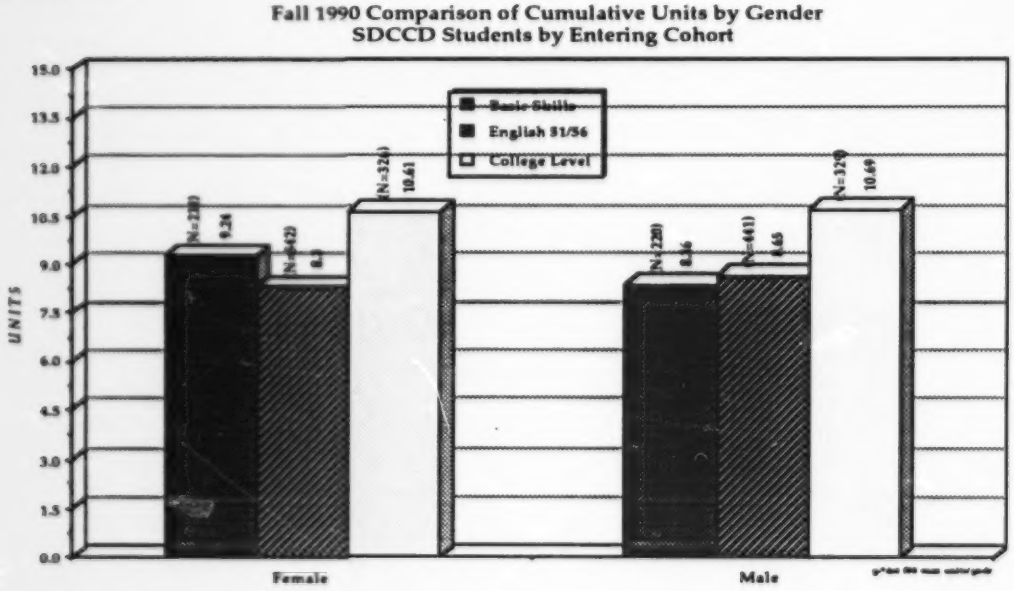
Graph 54



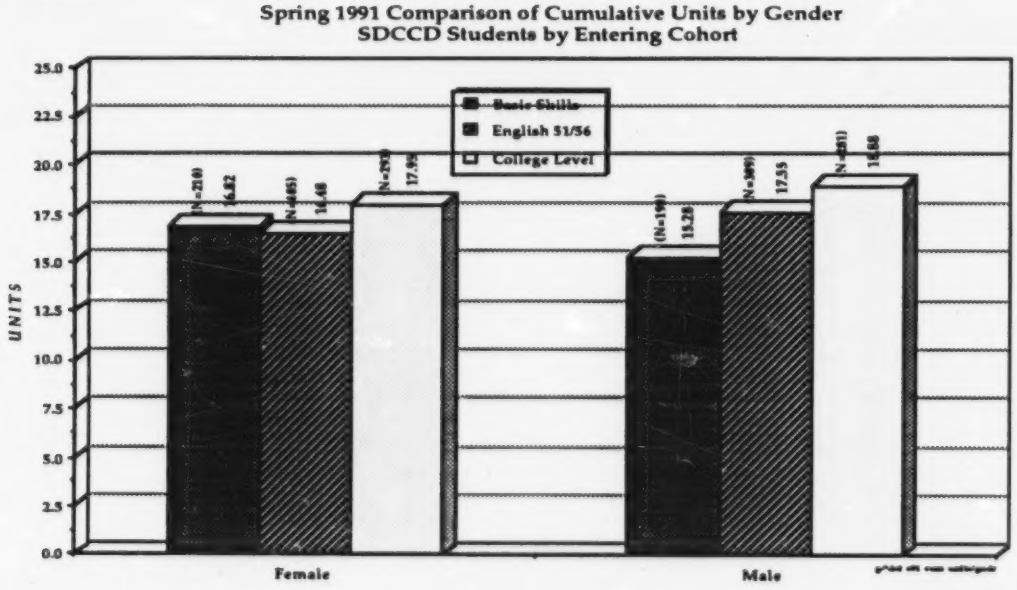
Cumulative Units Earned by Gender

The pattern of cumulative unit attainment was less consistent than that of cumulative grade point average. For the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 semesters, men had only minor advantages in cumulative unit attainment in the English 51/56 and college level cohorts, but women had somewhat higher units at the basic skills level. The differences were less pronounced in the Fall 1991 and Spring 1992 terms with the exception of the basic skills cohort, where women had approximately 10% more units than men.

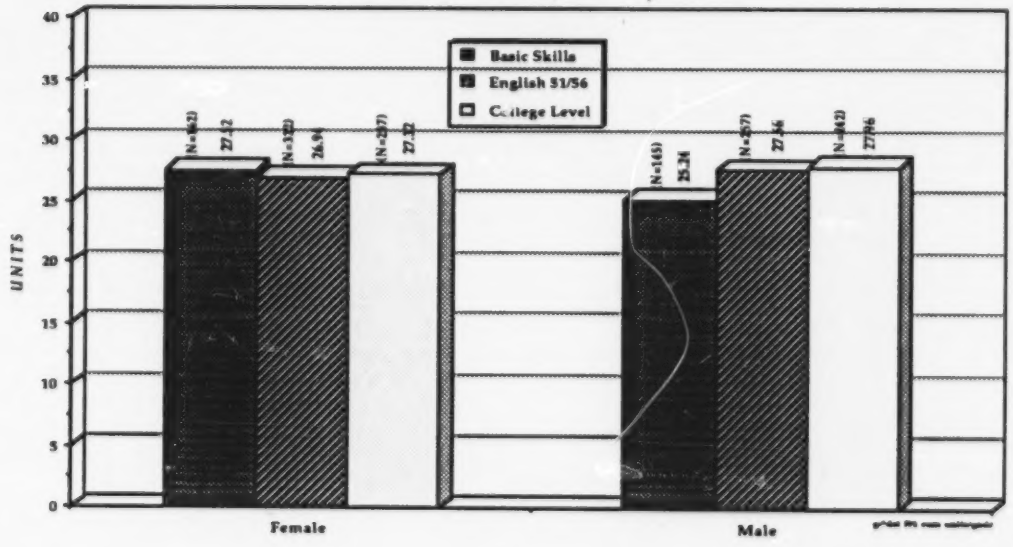
Graph 55



Graph 56

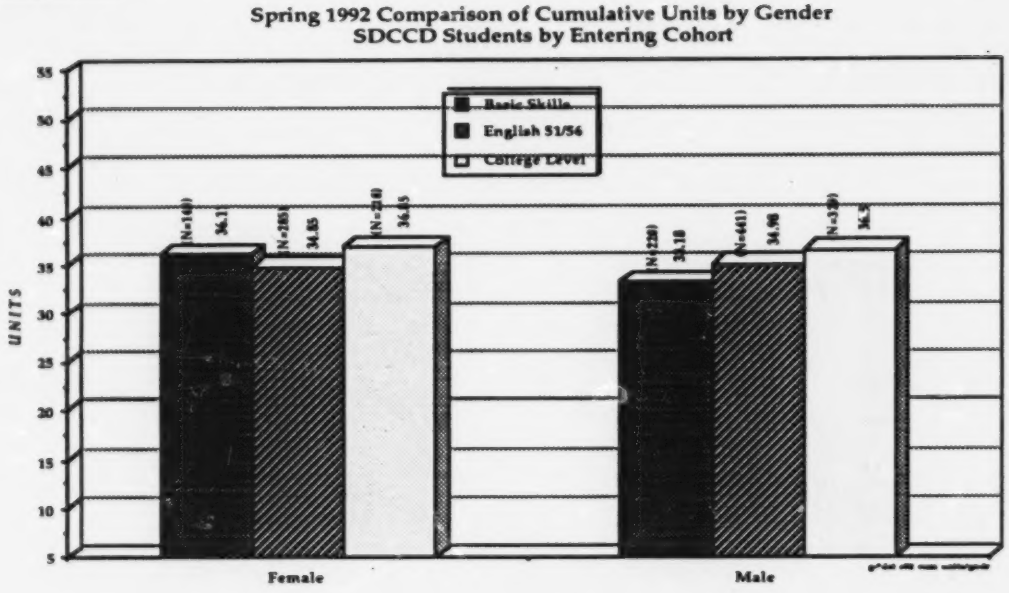


Graph 57



(Cumulative Units Earned by Gender Continued)

Graph 58



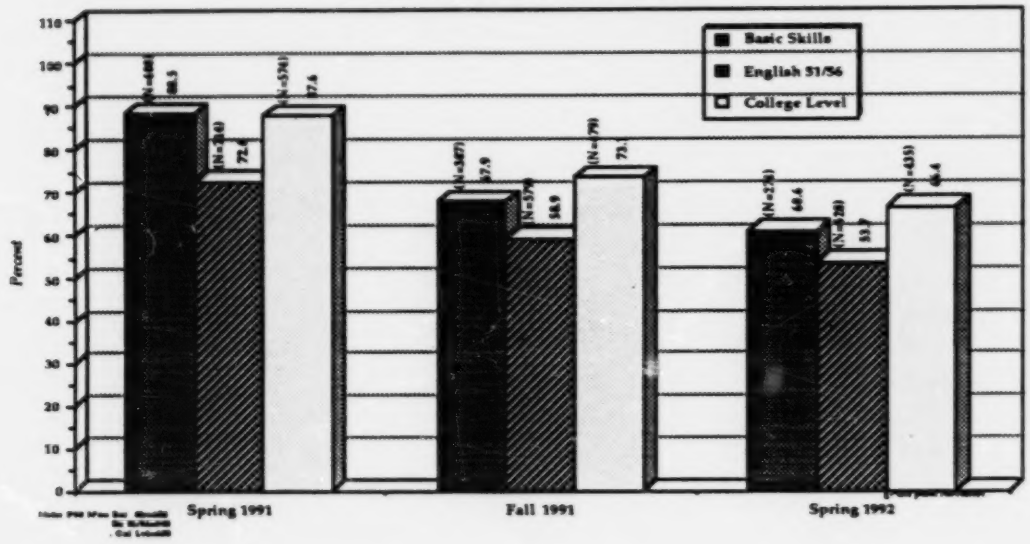
Persistence

Semester-to-Semester Rates by Gender

The following graphs show the percentage of Fall 1990 entrants still enrolled in subsequent semesters. The analysis excluded students with cumulative units of zero. For students entering basic skills English, women had higher persistence rates to the Spring 1991 and Fall 1991 semesters, with rates almost equalizing in the Spring 1992 term. During Spring 1991, persistence for both men and women in the basic skills cohort was higher than persistence for students in the higher English level cohorts. English 51/56 persistence was lower in all semesters than basic skills and college level entrants.

Graph 59

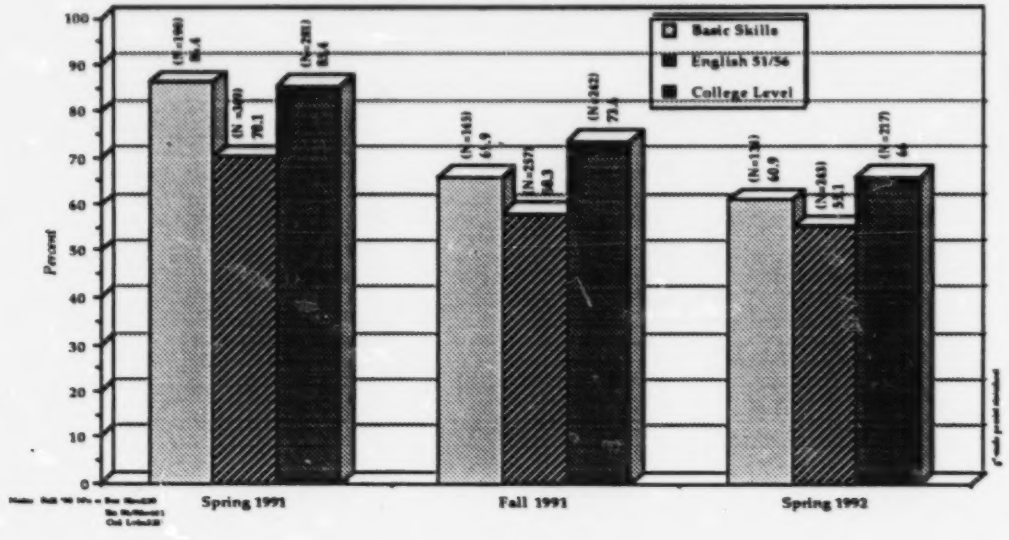
SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



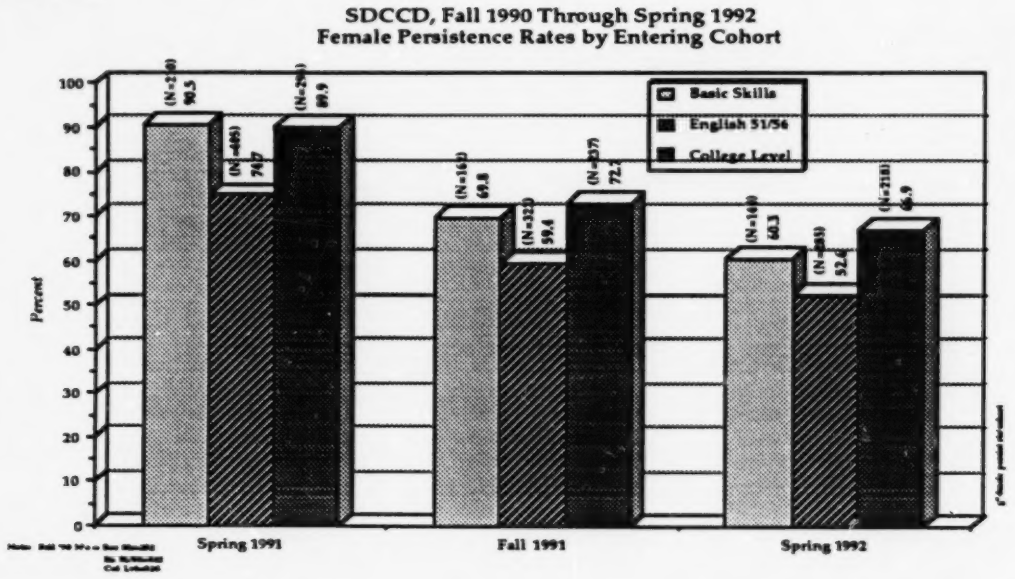
Semester-to-Semester Rates by Gender

Graph 60

SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
Male Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



Graph 61


SDCCD, Fall 1990 Through Spring 1992
Female Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort
Basic Skills
English 51/56
College Level
Percent
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Spring 1991
Fall 1991
Spring 1992

Progression to College Level Courses From Basic Skills and English 51/56

Men were more likely than women to successfully complete college level courses in subsequent semesters; however, the percentage differences were minor.

Table 5

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 Basic Skills Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses in Subsequent Terms, by Gender

Basic Skills	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	225	130	57.8	105	46.7	98	43.6
Male	216	115	53.2	101	46.8	95	44.0
Total/Average	441	245	55.6	206	46.7	193	43.8

Note: "Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units if Fall 1990

Table 6

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 English 51/56 Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses in Subsequent Terms, by Gender

Engl. 51/56	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	536	288	53.7	253	47.2	222	41.4
Male	434	227	51.2	209	48.2	187	43.1
Total/Average	970	515	53.1	462	47.6	409	42.2

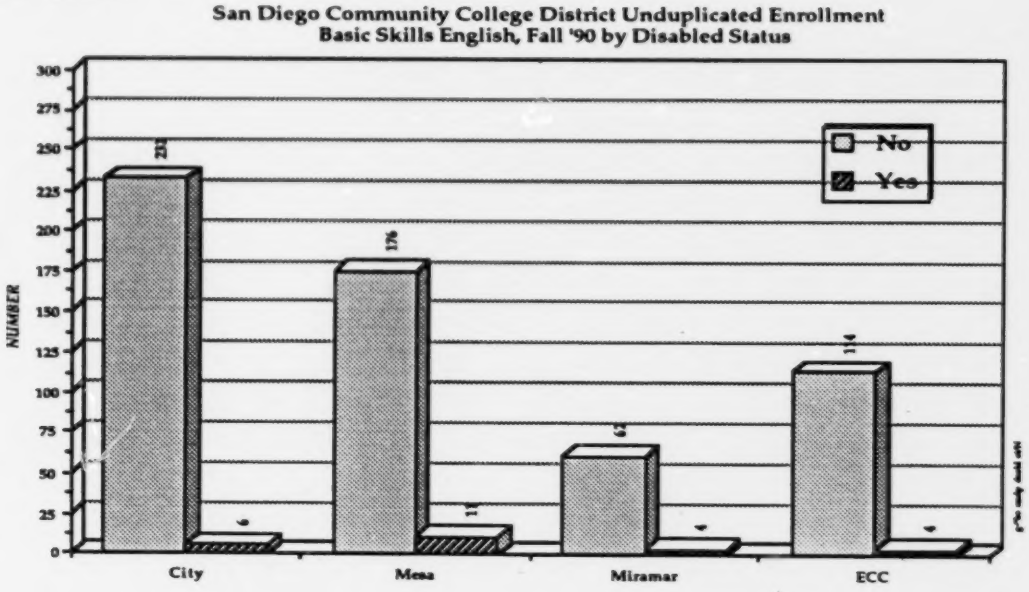
Note: " Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Part IV: Performance by Disability Status

Disability status was determined by the student's response to Question 17 on the Application for Enrollment, which asks: "Do you have a disabling condition that may require special services (testing/interpreter/reader)? " (Y/N). The graphs below show, by cohort, the numbers of students at each campus responding to the above question. The small number of students answering "Yes" to the question makes it difficult to generalize about the performance of other students with disabilities, or even of future students with disabilities entering similar English programs. Results, therefore, should be interpreted with caution.

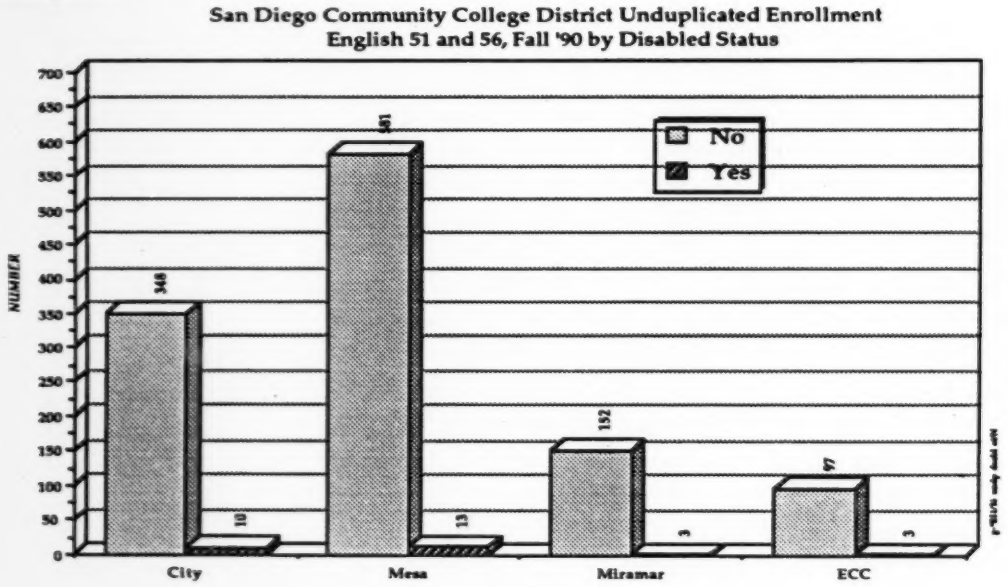
Enrollment by Disability Status

Graph 62

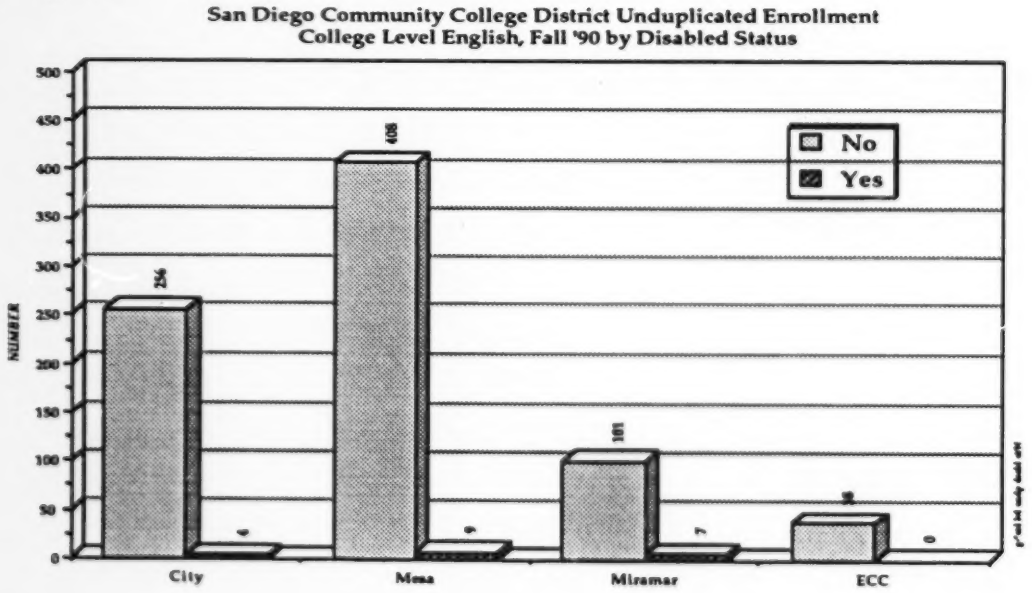


(Enrollment by Disability Status Continued)

Graph 63



Graph 64

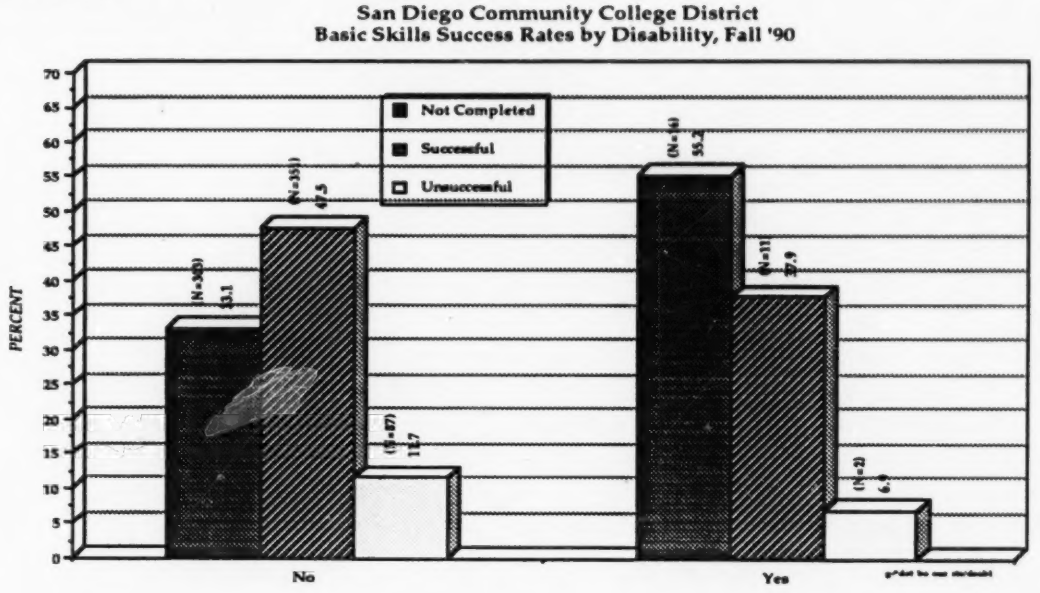


Course Success Rates

Students with disabilities were more likely to not complete courses than other students, but were generally no more likely to earn an unsuccessful grade (D, F, NC, or I) if they remain enrolled. Success rates were lowered by the high numbers of drops and withdrawals. Students with disabilities who entered at the English 51/56 level had performance rates that approximated those of students without disabilities, while entrance at the college level resulted in almost three-fourths of the students not completing the course.

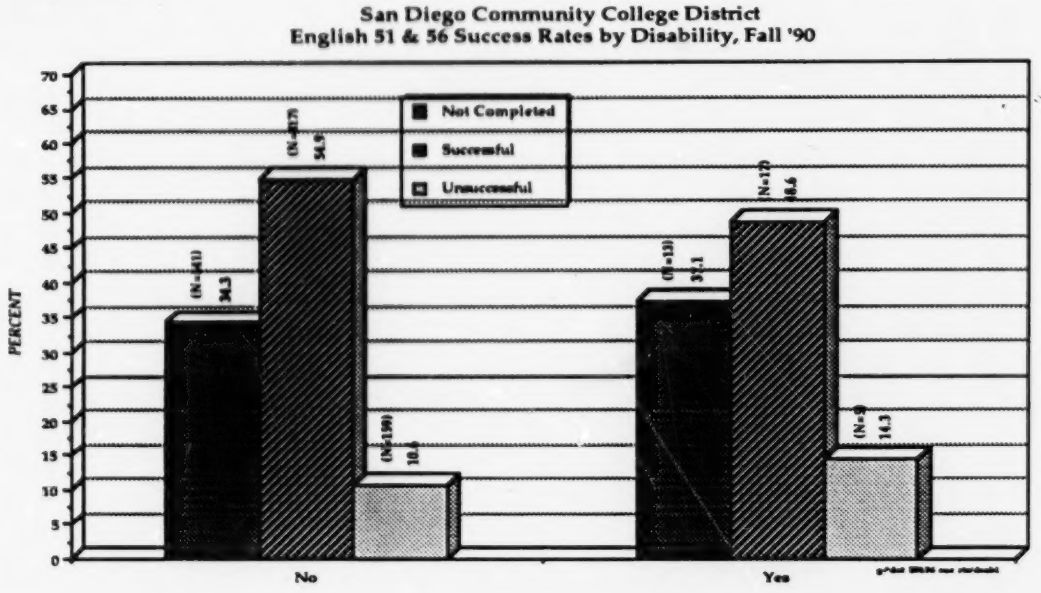
Course Success Rates by Disability Status

Graph 65

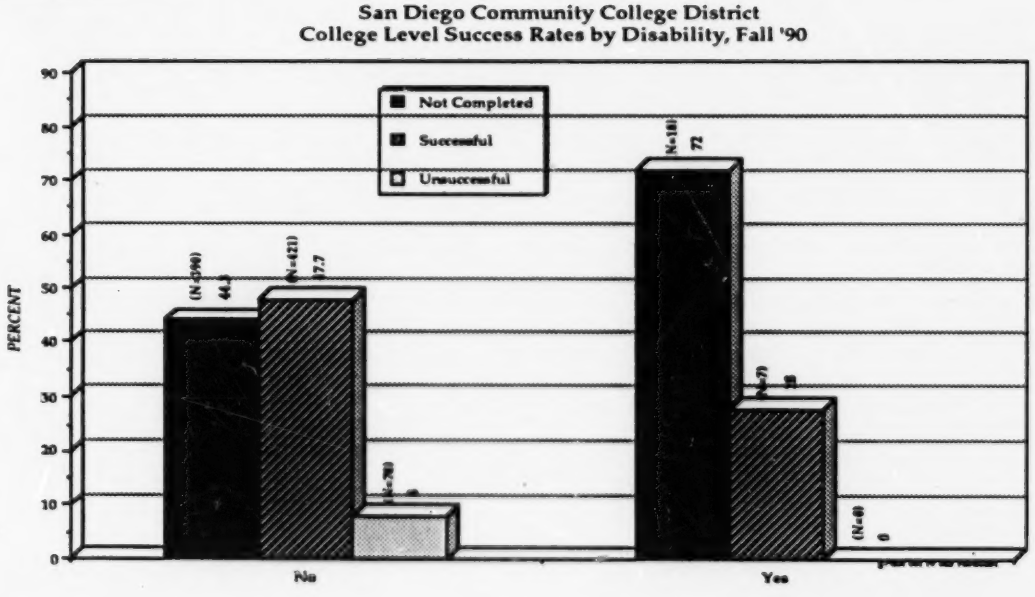


(Course Success Rates by Disability Status Continued)

Graph 66



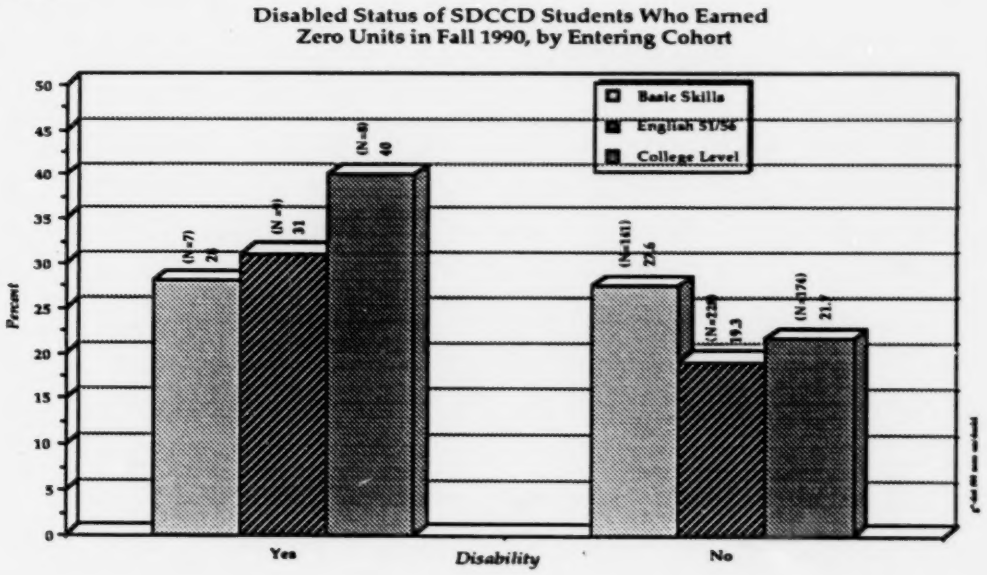
Graph 67



Percent of Students Earning Zero Units in Fall, 1990 by Disability Status

The small number of students who indicated that they have a disabling condition makes it difficult to say with certainty whether the data are representative of the entire population of entering students with disabilities. For students who entered at the basic skills level, students with disabilities were no more likely to earn zero units than students without disabilities. Those who entered at higher levels, however, showed substantially larger proportions of students with disabilities earning zero units than other students. 31% of English 51/56 entrants and 40% of college level entrants earned zero units during the Fall 1990 term. While it is not known what other courses these students attempted nor is it known what services they were already receiving from the campus, the disparity between students with disabilities and those without warrants further attention.

Graph 68



Course Performance and Progression

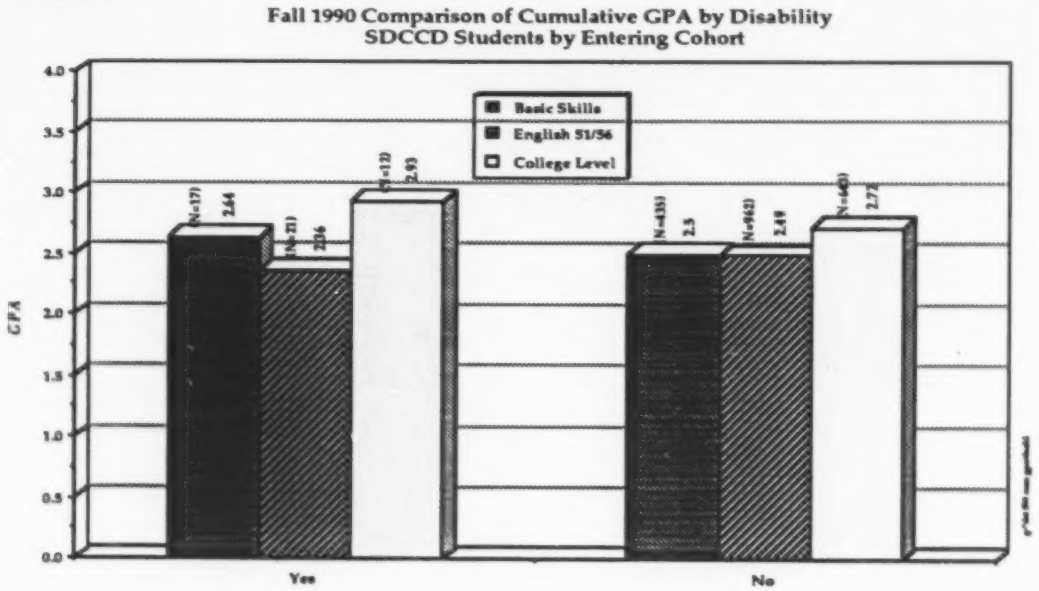
The following analysis included only students with greater than zero units earned. The results should be interpreted in light of the above findings, which showed that substantial numbers of students with disabilities failed to earn units in the Fall 1990 term, and are not included in the longitudinal analysis unless they earned units in a

subsequent semester. In any event, the validity of conclusions drawn below is clouded by the small number of students with disabilities meeting the criteria to be included in this section of the study.

Cumulative Grade Point Average by Disability Status

Students with disabilities in the basic skills cohort performed nearly as well as other students in terms of cumulative grade point average, while those in the English 51/56 cohort began to slightly outperform other students beginning with the Spring 1991 semester. College level students with disabilities had higher cumulative grade point averages than non-disabled students in every term studied.

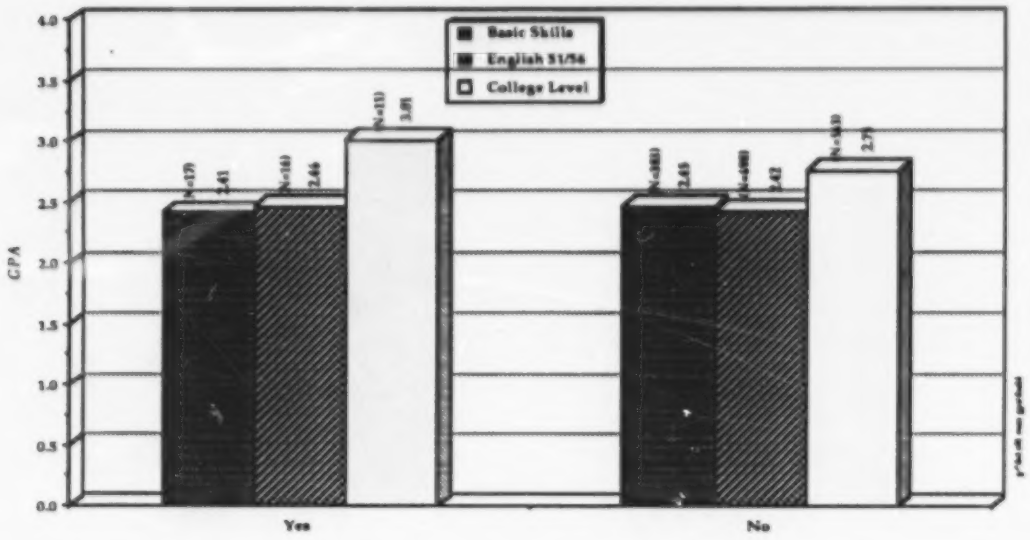
Graph 69



(Cumulative Grade Point Average by Disability Status Continued)

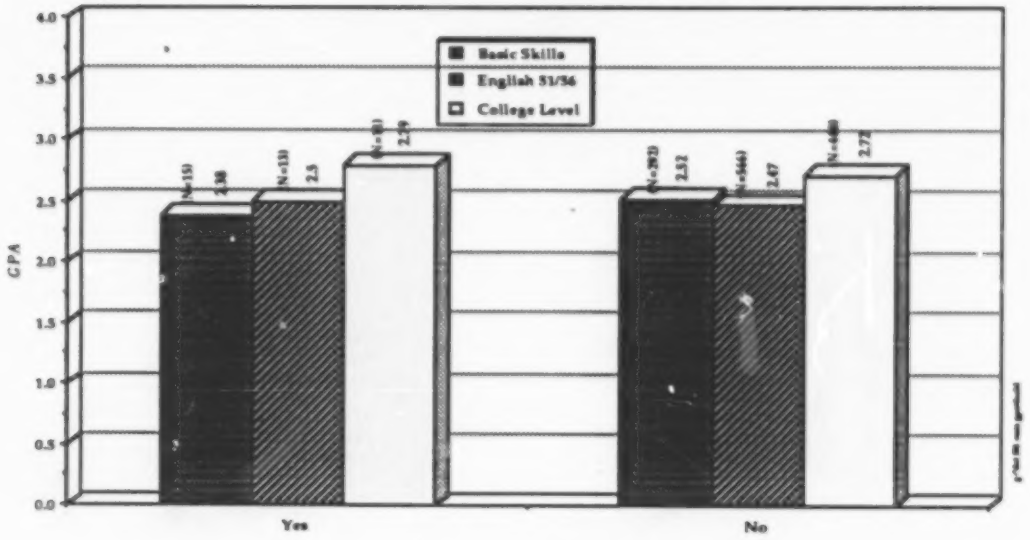
Graph 70

Spring 1991 Comparison of Cumulative GPA by Disability
SDCCD Students by Entering Cohort



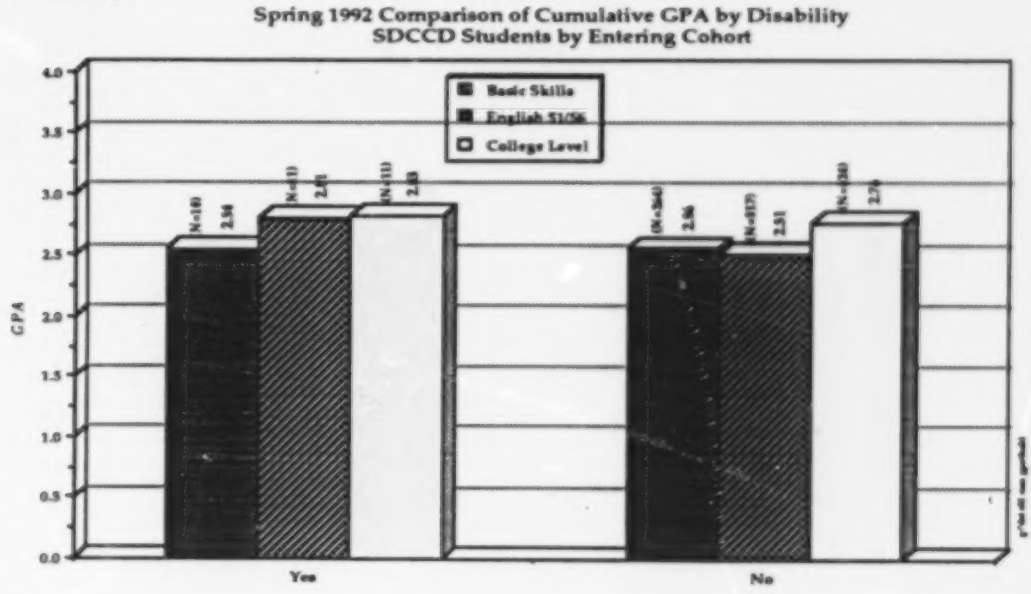
Graph 71

Fall 1991 Comparison of Cumulative GPA by Disability
SDCCD Students by Entering Cohort



(Cumulative Grade Point Average by Disability Status Continued)

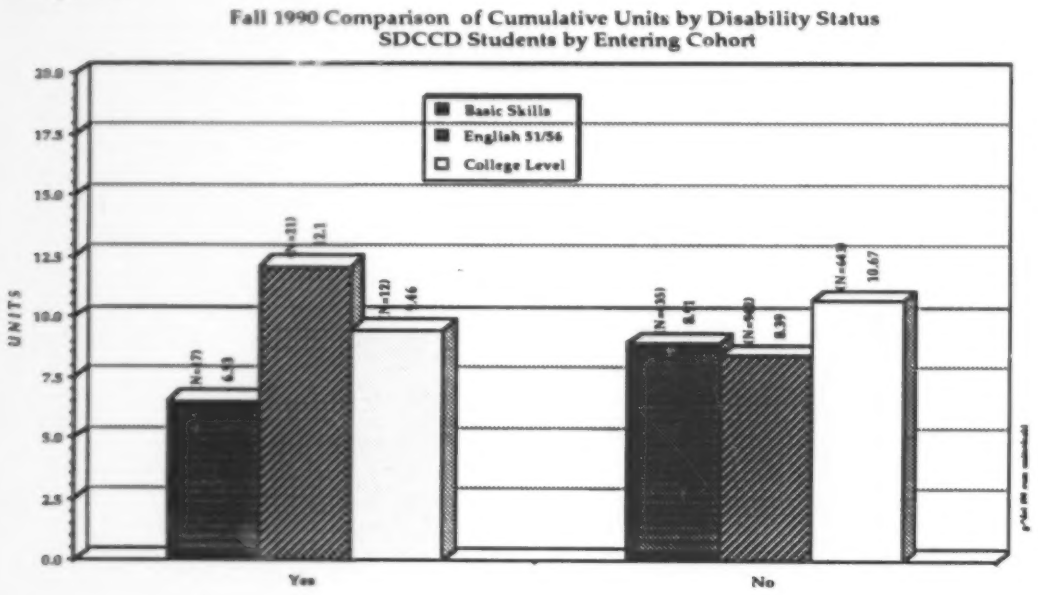
Graph 7:



Cumulative Units Earned by Disability Status

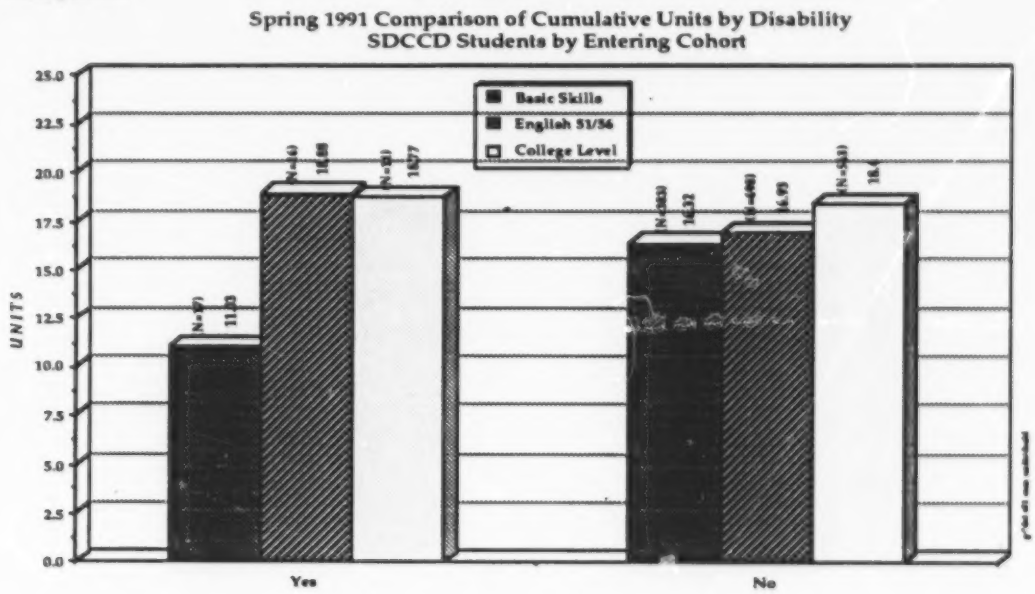
Students with disabilities in the basic skills cohort had lower cumulative units than other students, in spite of having superior persistence rates. Those who entered at the English 51/56 level performed slightly better than non-disabled students and had comparable rates of persistence, while college level entrants with disabilities had cumulative units comparable to other students in spite of having superior persistence (over 90%) for the duration of the analysis.

Graph 73

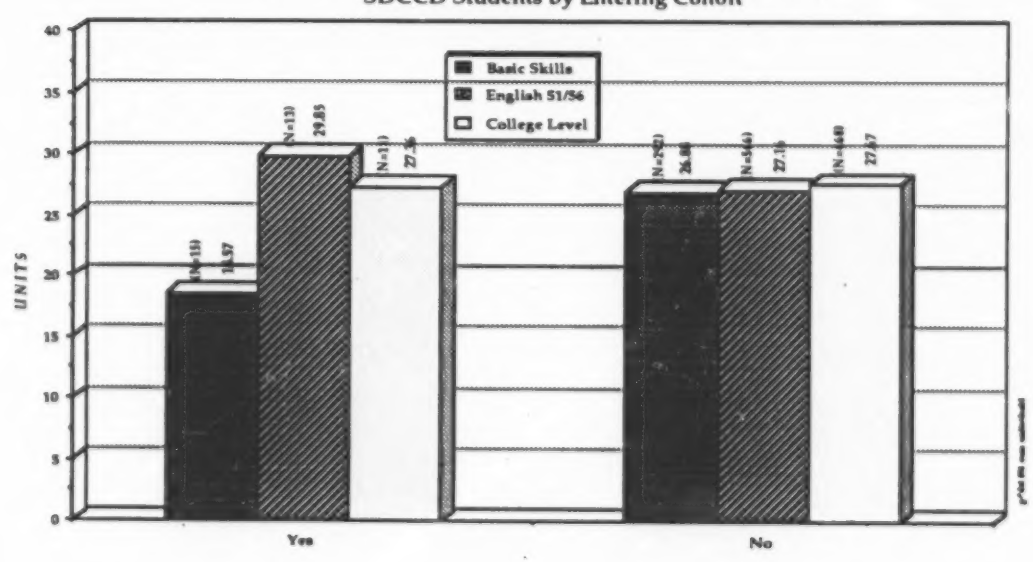


(Cumulative Units Earned by Disability Status Continued)

Graph 74

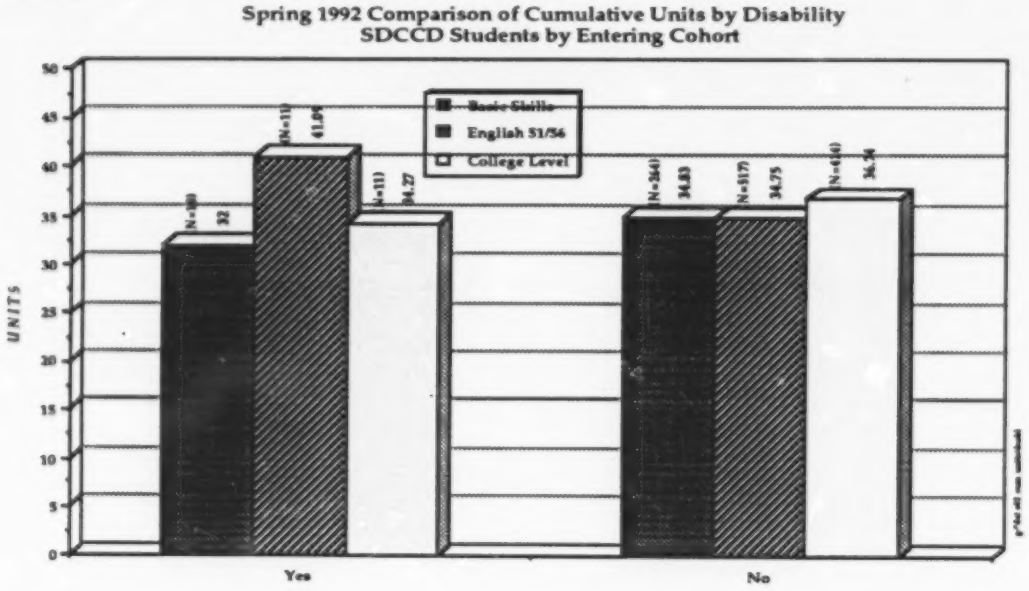


Graph 75



(Cumulative Units by Disability Status Continued)

Graph 76

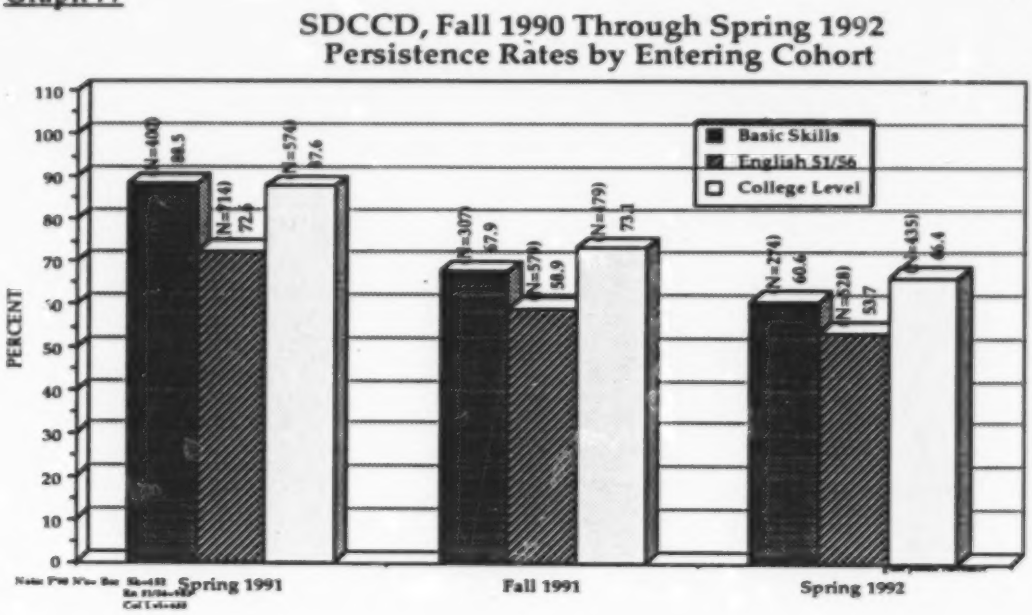


Persistence

Semester-to-Semester Rates

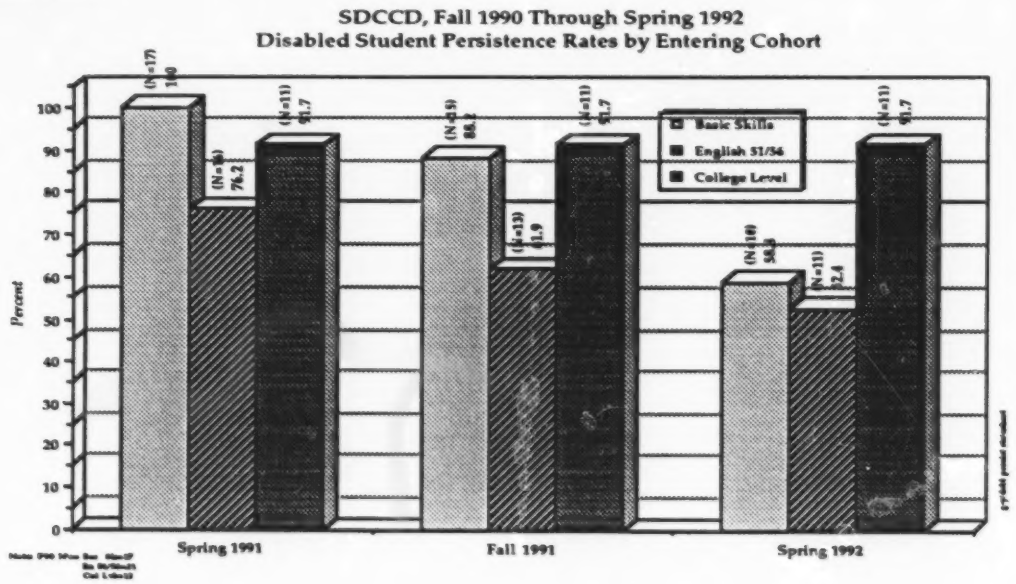
Basic skills disabled students who earned greater than zero units had rates of persistence superior to non-disabled students through the Fall 1991 semester. For students with disabilities who entered at the college level, 11 of the 12 Fall 1990 cohort remained through the Spring 1992 term.

Graph 77

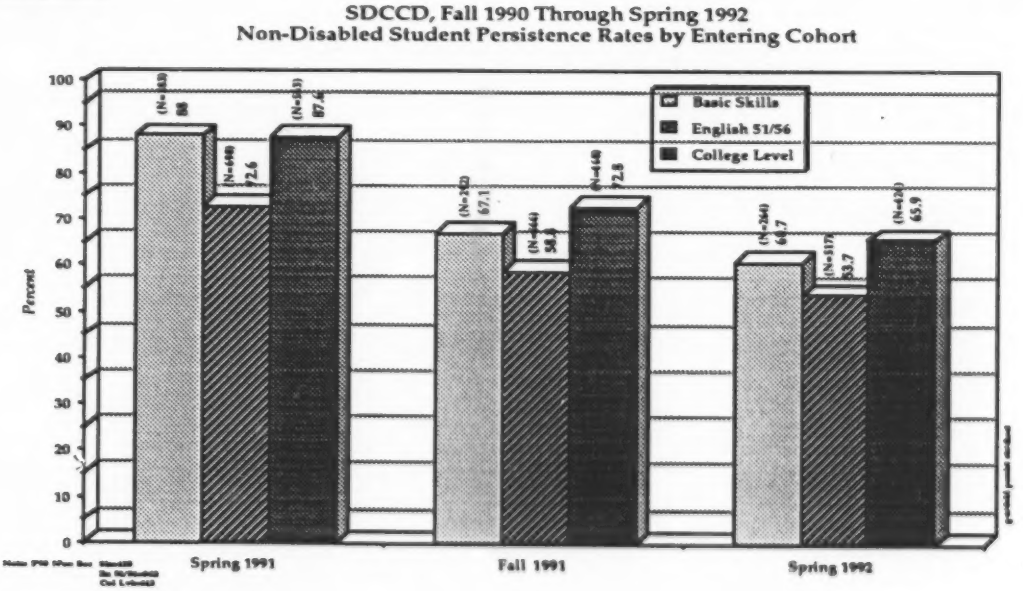


Semester-to-Semester Rates by Disability Status

Graph 78



Graph 79



Progression to College Level Courses From Basic Skills and English 51/56

The small size of the Fall 1990 cohort of students with disabilities led to inconsistent results in this part of the study. In comparison to non-disabled students, a smaller percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in college level courses.

Table 7

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 Basic Skills Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses Fall '90 and Subsequent Terms, by Disabled Status

	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
Basic Skills	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	423	237	56.0	199	47.0	187	44.2
Yes	18	8	44.4	7	38.9	6	33.3
Total/Average	441	245	55.6	206	46.7	193	43.8

Note: "Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Table 6

San Diego Community College District Fall '90 English 51/56 Students Who Successfully Completed College Level Courses Fall '90 and Subsequent Terms, by Gender

	Fall 90	Spring 91		Fall 91		Spring 92	
Engl. 51/56	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
No	950	505	53.2	452	47.6	402	42.3
Yes	20	10	50.0	10	50.0	7	35.0
Total/Average	970	515	53.1	462	47.6	409	42.2

Note: " Original N" consists of students earning greater than zero units in Fall 1990

Recommendations

Tracking entering English cohorts over four semesters showed that students who entered the San Diego Community Colleges at levels below college level English tended to accumulate units and maintain grade point averages comparable to or only slightly below students who entered at the college level. The primary differences in performance were noted in the first semester of attendance. Students who entered at the basic skills or English 51/56 levels were more likely to not be successful in English courses and were more likely to earn zero units during the first term of enrollment. It is recommended that future retention efforts focusing on below-college level entrants, including English 51/56 entrants, put primary emphasis on first semester success in the program. If students are, in fact, "testing the waters" by enrolling in the San Diego Community Colleges, a successful first semester may provide the impetus for the student to continue at the college.

The authors also recommend that campus decision makers read this report carefully to note performance differences among college level entrants in particular ethnic, age, gender or disability categories. In some cases, the success rates and persistence rates for college level entrants are below rates for pre-collegiate entrants in the same equity category. A program which directs students to services based solely on low entering English levels or test scores would fail to serve higher level students who might benefit from the same services.

Future updates of this report will be somewhat condensed in the interests of timeliness and readability. Measuring the first semester English course success, first semester zero-unit attainment, and semester-to-semester persistence will provide the basis for a performance comparison among groups, and will provide an ongoing measure of the effectiveness of matriculation and student equity programs. Because of the performance similarities between basic skills and English 51/56 entrants, future reports will combine basic skills and English 51/56, forming a new category tentatively titled "Pre-Collegiate, Native English Speakers." This category will be compared to the college level entrants and to students entering at the English as a Second Language (ESL) level.